Dungeon®

ADVENTURES FOR TSR ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1995 ISSUE #51
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COVER: Evil lurks in the shallow waters of Moon Isle Atoll in this month's cover painting by Dana Knutson for "Nbod's Room."

Hail! and Farewell!

After eight years of editing DUNGEON® Adventures, this is my final issue. I'm not leaving TSR but am moving to the Book Department as managing editor. Book editors are behind-the-scenes people, so I won't have my say in public the way I have here for almost every issue of DUNGEON magazine. But that doesn't mean that I'm not busily working away with the other book editors to help make TSR books exciting and entertaining. So when you buy our newest book release, please let me know how we're doing. You can write to me at TSR Books, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147. I'm also on line at tsr.books@genie.geis.com.

I'm leaving DUNGEON Adventures in the capable hands of Wolfgang Baur as its new editor. After writing several exciting adventures for DUNGEON magazine, Wolf joined our staff three years ago as associate editor. How he got here is a great story full of serendipity and coincidences. Ask him about it if you see him at a convention someday.

Thank you all for eight great years of editing DUNGEON Adventures.

Barbara G. Young

All things change, but fortunately they don't change much. After a three year apprenticeship, I'll be putting on the Big Wizard Hat. You won't see any major changes; the magazine will continue to bring you solid, action-filled adventures every 60 days. Drop me a line if there's anything you'd like to see (or not see), or reach me on line at tsr.mags@genie.geis.com.

It's been a privilege to learn from Barbara Young's editorial expertise, and I'm sure she will do great things in the Book Department. Along with Roger Moore, she defined what DUNGEON Adventures is. Most importantly, it's a magazine written by readers, and a magazine that responds to readers. I'll be carrying on those traditions. Of course, Barbara will be missed, but she'll still be around.

Here's to the future, and the adventures it holds.

Wolfgang Baur

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The boundaries which divide Life from Death are at best shadowy and vague. Who shall say where the one ends, and where the other begins?

Edgar Allan Poe, *The Premature Burial.*

LETTERS

Please let us know what you think about this issue of DUNGEON® Adventures. Although we can't print every letter we receive, we read them all and seriously consider your comments and suggestions. Write to "Letters," DUNGEON Adventures, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147 U.S.A. You can also contact us by sending electronic mail to tsr.mags@genie.geis.com. We will not publish your address (regular or email) unless you specifically request us to do so.

Read Between the Stats

I had to drop out of gaming for a while, but am glad to say that since I have gotten back into using DUNGEON magazine, the usefulness is still there. When I was in high school, I had plenty of free time to make my own modules. Now, eons later, I barely have the time to work on a campaign, much less write complete adventures. I don't even play AD&D® games anymore, but your magazine is more valuable than ever. I do play ICE's *Rolemaster* game, and sad to say there is not much support for it (relative to TSR games), so I use DUNGEON Magazine for my ideas.

This lets me look at your adventures in a different light than most DMs. I don't care if the adventure is made for the DARK SUN®, FORGOTTEN REALMS®, GREYHAWK®, D&D®, AD&D, or whatever setting, since I have to convert everything. I am even able to use your hero and spy adventures as well. ("Hellfire Hostages" [issue #25] will be going against my party in a few months.)

My secret? Don't look at the stats, locations, monsters, or data. Look instead at what the concepts are, the characters, their motivations, the circumstances. Needless to say, if some major part of the module is intrinsic to the specific system or campaign, then I can salvage less. Just about any adventure has at least something of value in it, and most are perfect for transplant, if you just know how to do it. In fact I get more out of DUNGEON Magazine than I do from published TSR modules, as the stand-alone modules are more linear or are adaptations of books. Don't get me wrong, they have quality material, and are fine for most beginners. But DUNGEON Magazine has the most bang for the buck.

Keep up the good work, and tell the rest of the readers to start reading more than just the words.

David Pakalnis
No address given

I think you just told them, David.

No Revision Needed

I was quite disappointed to see in DUNGEON issue #49 the adventure called "North of Narborel" which was just a revision of a scenario that appeared in DRAGON® Magazine #75. The fact is not that the adventure or its revision was not good (on the contrary), but I think that this magazine is not the right place to publish revisions of old modules. If your purpose was to present a good adventure that new players would not have seen, then you should have published a "Best of DUNGEON Adventures," which would be more fair for old readers of the magazines and to the original author.

Moreover, I think that editing a "Best of DUNGEON Adventures" in the form of a great campaign would also be a good idea, but perhaps would be a much more difficult task.

Laurent Picard
Bordeau, France

Bursting With Ideas

I had initially bought issue #35 only out of curiosity, but your magazine's value to my campaign has been immense. It's a great time saver and is bursting with ideas. I have almost always managed to use at least one module from each issue directly, while mangling and twisting the rest to suit my campaign's needs. Three cheers for Richard Chase on "Diversity in Gaming" for his moderate position—the style of the game will tend toward the conditions that are most favorable to it.

Some of my players asked for more role-playing, and they got it. The bard, with the help of the others' heavy artillery, rescued and gained a henchman in "Melody." The cleric then provided divine insight from the Patron of Music for Melody's *atonement,* which led to a quest to regain the Temple of the Muses, a mish-mash of the map from "To Bite the Moon" and the opponents and tactics of "Honor Lost, Honor Regained" [all from issue #48].

After consulting a sage to research the possible genetic effects of the *sculpt features* spell on the eoshee, they were directed to Professor Hakim ibn Rashad of Qadib, thus becoming embroiled in "The Assassin Within" [issue #47]. Failing to defeat a higher-level version of the holy slayer in combat, they had to talk him out of his mission.

Life seemed to return to normal when the party accompanied their mage to the Glitchegumee Swamp to collect troll parts for his *wondrous ring of continuous regeneration.* There they became part-time pest exterminators and monster baby sitters as they were thoroughly amused by "Old Man Katan and the Mushroom Band" [issue #41].

However, back in the adventurers'

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hometown, agents of a defrauded insurance company and several thieves guilds have discovered that the PC thief stole several paintings from the third floor of Vaulkner's museum, during the party's encounter with "The Hand of Al-Djamal" [issue #44]. More adventures are in the making.

Toh Ee Loong
Republic of Singapore

Valuable Lessons

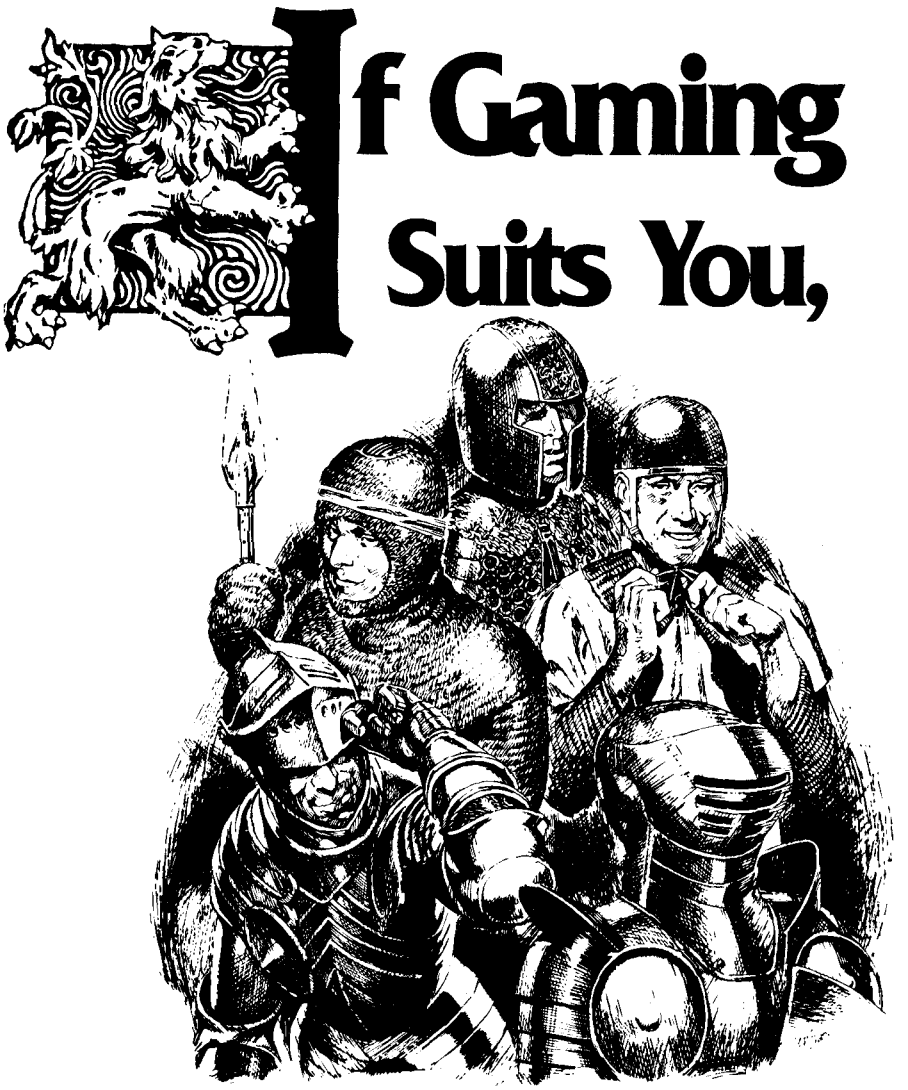
Just a quick note in response to Taj Wood of Vista, California, author of the letter titled "Discouraged" that appeared in DUNGEON #48. I can honestly relate. I've been a role-player for 12 years and a Dungeon Master for the last five years. If there is one thing I have learned in that time, it is this: The players have the opportunity to make or break an adventure, but I, as the DM, have the ability to take that opportunity away from them.

If you, the DM, are creative and have the desire and capability to let your own imagination run wild, then you can be a terrific DM. Remember this point: Bad players cannot make a DM bad, but a good DM can make bad players good. Live by it.

If your players are hurting the game, raise some questions with those players. Ask them what their goals are as role-players. Ask them if they realize what it is to role-play. Let them know that the AD&D game is a *role-playing* game. And finally, ask them why they are playing. Once you have gathered their answers, analyze the responses and determine if you need to part ways.

Remember not to give up too easily. You may be able to teach them some valuable lessons about role-playing that they need to know, before they can develop into the kind of players that have given strength to the game and kept it alive and well for so long.

Terry Manska
Helena, Montana
Ω



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NBOD'S ROOM

BY JEFF CROOK

Just try to get a good night's rest.

Artwork by Dana Knutson

Jeff writes: "This is supposed to be a short biography telling everyone how, as a precocious lad, I used to dream of knights and dragons and maidens fair. That's a lie. I loved riding my bike and destroying my toys. And I loved football. Any kind of football, but especially the Green Pack Peppers, as I called them at the time. So I will end this with a famous football phrase. Hi, Mom!"

"Nbod's Room" is an AD&D® adventure for one Dungeon Master and one player character of 4th or 5th level. It can also be played by up to four PCs of levels 1-2 (6 total levels). The player character (or characters) may be of any class, race, or alignment.

Technically, the entire adventure takes place within the confines of a single room. However, this room is a starting point, with magical doorways that lead to a hidden temple and a far-away isle. In this adventure, the room has been placed in an inn, but it can appear anywhere: a manor, a cottage, etc. No design for the inn has been provided, so that it may be more easily placed within the DM's own world, but a detailed floor plan of Nbod's room is included.

Adventure Background

Captain Nbod was a notorious scoundrel of the high seas, an adventurer whose exploits carried him to strange ports and mysterious lands. During his journeys, he discovered or purchased many queer and magical items, some of which he brought back to his room at the inn where he lived when not out prowling the shipping lanes.

Sometimes he spent days locked in his room, not even coming out to eat or drink; his food would sit untouched beside the door. When he did open the door, the innkeeper and the hired help often saw strange people within the room—people whom no one had seen enter and who were never seen to leave. Sometimes, weird sounds floated out from behind the door: drums, sea birds, the roar of a savage beast, and the surge of waves lapping against a distant beach.

Then one day, Captain Nbod entered his room and was never seen again. After two weeks, the innkeeper became worried about his rent and hired a locksmith to open the door. The room was empty, the window and door locked from

the inside. No sign of Captain Nbod could be found. He never returned to the inn, and no word of him has come from those who sail the seas.

But in the night, when everyone has settled into bed, strange noises can still be heard from that room: primitive drums, jungle noises, the sounds of the sea. When the inn is full, the innkeeper reluctantly rents Nbod's room to travelers. Although most people who stay in the room have reported nothing out of the ordinary, several have fled in terror in the middle of the night, and a few have vanished as mysteriously as the old captain.

For the Dungeon Master

No matter where the DM places Nbod's room, the local people are very afraid to enter it, yet are intensely curious about it. The PC can hear a wealth of rumors, from the tales of the captain's ghost to the purported location of his hidden treasure. Several NPCs (detailed later) have their own stories to tell about the room. Other rumors can be added at the DM's discretion, related by minor NPCs whom the PC might meet at the inn or in the town.

The only requirement is that the DM place the room somewhere within a coastal town or village, preferably one with a good port. It is better if the PC has visited the town during a previous adventure and so has some knowledge of the layout of the streets and prominent buildings. The DM need not design an entire town to fit this adventure.

Nbod's room contains several pieces of furniture that appear quite ordinary. Among them are a wardrobe, a sea chest, and a copper bathtub. However, these three items are highly magical and may teleport the PC to predetermined places (as detailed later). Hidden in the room are various objects and clues that can lead to adventure. The most important of these is a magical dagger that several NPCs and monsters are actively seeking. (See "The *Leviathan Dagger*" sidebar.)

Beginning the Adventure

The adventure begins on the first night that the PC spends in Nbod's room. When the adventure was originally played, the PC arrived by ship on his way to a place farther inland. Seeking a place to stay for the night, he arrived in the middle of festival week and found that all the rooms were taken—all except Nbod's room. Alternatively, the PC may have heard tales about Captain Nbod and come seeking clues to where the old pirate hid his treasure. The DM should adapt the beginning of this adventure to suit the location of the room.

At the Inn

The innkeeper, Javius Noll, is frustrated by the rumors surrounding Nbod's room. He rarely finds an opportunity to rent it to anyone, and it costs him money in heating and cleaning costs to have it empty. When the hauntings first began he profited greatly, as every swaggering bravo wanted to test his mettle in the room, but now that the novelty has worn off, Javius has grown quite sick of it all.

Even though he himself has had several frightening experiences with the room, Javius will not convey his fears to a potential customer and will try to prevent the regulars from telling their rumors to new customers. If pressed by a PC with a forceful personality, the innkeeper says only that strange things have been known to happen in that room. As a last-ditch effort to secure the PC as a customer, he might ask the adventurer to try to end the hauntings.

Javius is a tall man with big bony elbows that look like knots in a rope. His sparse hair is ash-colored, and his eyes are gray. His personality is normally quite jovial, but he is prone to dark, silent moods. He is friendly but somewhat aloof, distracted at times, and quick to scowl at the first mention of the hauntings. He always wears clothing of coarse black cloth, as he has been in mourning for his dead wife for a number of years. The locals laughingly call him the Undertaker, but he doesn't find this joke very funny.

Javius Noll (innkeeper): AL N; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 9, D 10, C 12, I 13, W 10, Ch 14; ML 12.

Mola Hitchman, the chambermaid, is a girl bordering on womanhood. She is mousy and small, standing barely over 5' tall, with sandy-blond hair. Her large eyes are chocolate-brown; they are the feature she is most proud of. Mola will be drawn to a powerful female PC, seeking the woman as a friend and volunteering any information to her. She is shy around male PCs.

Although frightened by several bad experiences in Nbod's room, Mola loves to repeat her stories if she can be drawn out of her shell. Her duties require her to clean the room occasionally, and she will bring food and drink to anyone staying there.

Mola remembers Captain Nbod as a tall, grizzly man with frightening eyes. She can relate how he would stay in the room for days without coming out to eat or drink. Since his disappearance, she has heard noises from behind the closed door on several occasions. Once, while cleaning the room, the door slammed shut and jammed, and Mola was trapped inside for several anxious minutes before Javius came to her rescue. She has also seen Nbod's ghost, but she is loath to recount this event because it scared her so badly.

The *Leviathan Dagger*

This unusual magical blade was stolen by Captain Nbod from the powerful sea hag Brinea. Its blade is flame-shaped and glows green in the dark. Its handle of ivory is carved in the likeness of a sounding whale. The steel tale-fluke serves as a crosspiece, while the whale's mouth holds the pommel, a large pearl.

In normal combat, the dagger is of +2 enchantment, but when used against sea creatures, it is a powerful +4 weapon. Magical or magic-using sea creatures can sense the dagger's presence within 100 yards and will attempt to steal it at the earliest possible opportunity. In addition to the dagger's other attributes, its pommel is a *pearl of the sirines* with all the powers ascribed to that magical gem (*DMG*, page 176).

The *leviathan dagger* figures prominently in two religions. The first is that of Zoon Quag, priest of an evil goddess of the sea. He desires the dagger to use in his terrible rituals of human sacrifice and will do anything to get it.

The headhunters who inhabit the islands around Moon Isle Atoll have known of the dagger for generations. The sea hag Brinea used it to slay a great native chieftain. Since that time, the *leviathan dagger* has been considered a cursed object. The headhunters fear it greatly and will grovel in its presence, fleeing if they are able. They trust no one who uses the dagger.

Mola Hitchman (maid): AL NG; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 7, D 13, C 8, I 7, W 12, Ch 11; ML 6.

In the taproom, an odd specimen of tropical fish lives in a large glass bowl atop the bar. One day Mola Hitchman entered Nbod's room to clean it and found the copper bathtub filled with warm seawater. The odd fish was swimming around in the tub. The door and window had been locked until Mola entered, so she had no idea how the tub came to be filled with seawater, much less having any explanation for the presence of the fish.

Mola adopted the colorful fish as a pet. Some of the customers believe that Esmarelda (as the fish is named) is the reincarnation of Captain Nbod; others claim that the fish is the old captain, *polymorphed* by some wizardly enemy. All attempts to communicate with the fish have met with complete failure. Esmarelda has become a town celebrity, and people drink toasts to her good health.

Esmarelda is an ordinary—but beautiful—tropical fish that inadvertently swam through the magical teleportal in the copper tub when it opened momentarily. (See "Nbod's Teleportals," page 11.)

Ghostly Happenings

Many people have reported seeing what they believe to be Nbod's ghost. All these sightings have occurred in the wee hours of the night, in and around the inn. All the witnesses agree that the spirit appeared as a dark, spectral figure in heavy black robes with a great gray beard protruding ominously from the cowl of its robe. They have no doubt that the spirit was the old pirate returned to haunt the inn.

Often, while cleaning the room, Mola will find that objects have been moved when she wasn't looking. Once she witnessed the tub fill with water of its own accord.

Everyone agrees that the focal point of the haunting seems to be Captain Nbod's old room. Just about every night, something strange is heard from up there. Mostly it's just bumps in the night, but sometimes a hideous moan floats down the stairs, chilling the blood of those trying to enjoy a cool ale. Once, a man passing in the hall nearly fainted when he heard (or so he claims) a tiger growl just on the other side of the door.

Evening conversation at the inn is bound to come around to the subject of Nbod's treasure, especially if there is someone new to talk with, like the PC. A range of theories is available from the inn's regulars, from the rumor that Nbod hid a treasure map in the room to the wild idea that the treasure itself is hidden there. More pessimistic folk say that the captain spent all his money on wild parties and unwholesome adventures. Some even believe that he donated it all to some evil cult that eventually devoured him. Javius has gone so far as to give the room a brief search, but he never speaks about what happened to him in Nbod's room that dark night. All that's certain is that he found no treasure.

Nbod's Room

Read or paraphrase the following description to the player as the PC enters Nbod's room. Earlier, Mola Hitchman filled the washbowl and the bathtub and turned back the sheets. She accompanies the PC to see that all is satisfactory.

> This room is well furnished with solid furniture that has been bolted to the wooden floor.
>
> A large bed dominates the room with its massive headboard and ornately carved posts. Its thick blankets have been turned back to reveal green silken sheets. Beside the bed, a small table holds an unlit taper in a bronze candleholder.
>
> At the foot of the bed sits a massive sea chest of teakwood bound in iron, with an iron lock worked in the likeness of a screaming face. A wardrobe of dark, almost black wood stands against the north wall.
>
> Beside the door and against the west wall, a ceramic washbowl filled with cool water sits on a small table. Against the south wall, a large desk with many drawers and cabinets awaits exploration. Over the desk hangs a painting of a man with a thick black beard and piercing green eyes. He stands at the bow of a ship in the midst of a storm, brandishing a strange, wavy-bladed dagger. Lurking in the foam of the storm-tossed sea, a gigantic creature rises up, its tentacles curled to strike.
>
> In the southeast corner of the room, a large copper tub filled with steaming water invites a relaxing bath. An assortment of fragrant soaps and oils is displayed on a low table beside the tub. A shaving mirror hangs on the south wall, and beside it a straight razor with an ivory handle dangles by its cord from a nail.

Several of the items in Nbod's room have special significance in this adventure. Three of the objects contain magical teleportals to other locations in this world.

Bed: The bed is comfortable and, to all appearances, rather ordinary. The bedposts rise seven feet off the floor and are topped by round wooden balls. There is a 1-in-6 chance of finding a secret compartment in the northwest bedpost, accessible by unscrewing the ball atop the post. A map labeled "Moon Isle Atoll" (see page 11) is rolled up and tucked into the hollow bedpost. Unless a light is directed into the hollow, the map cannot be seen, although probing fingers may discover it. The balls on the other bedposts will also unscrew, but those posts are solid wood.

Sea chest: The sea chest appears empty if it is opened with its key (found at area 10) or by picking or smashing the lock. (The lock is not trapped, and may be picked with a +15% bonus.) But if the proper command word ("Conundrum") is spoken, a magical portal opens in the bottom of the chest, a gateway that leads to area 4 on Moon Isle Atoll. (See the map on page 15.) The chest radiates strong alteration magic. A *detect magic* spell indicates only that the object is magical, not that a teleportal exists. A rope ladder has been folded and stowed on the underside of the chest's lid. The ladder is clearly visible when the lid is open, but its use may not be apparent. Careful examination of the chest reveals that it has been jimmied at least once, and that the lock is in a poor state of repair.

Wardrobe: Anyone who looks into the wardrobe sees only an unremarkable assortment of cotton towels. If the proper command word ("Grindstaff") is spoken, a magical portal appears between the open wardrobe doors. This gateway leads to area 1 of "The Temple." (See the map on page 14.)

Desk: The numerous drawers and cubbyholes in the desk are either empty or contain unremarkable books on navigation and sea charts of questionable

accuracy. However, a secret drawer in the desk contains a magical weapon known as the *leviathan dagger.* (See the sidebar on page 9.) The secret drawer is very well hidden and almost impossible to detect (1-in-20 chance). Once found, the drawer can be opened by a thief's successful attempt at picking the lock, or it may be pried open with the tip of a knife.

Painting: Other than its subject matter, the oil painting is unremarkable. However, neatly folded and tucked into the back of the frame is a *portable hole* that contains a compass, a bronze sextant, two torches, a shovel, and a small box filled with peculiar little balls of soft wax.

Copper tub: The copper tub is filled with hot water when the PC first enters the room. If the proper command word ("Maybelle") is spoken, a magical portal appears in the bottom of the tub. This gateway leads to area 10 inside the Singing Cliffs. (See the map on page 15.) If the PC samples the bath water, it tastes slightly salty. An observant PC may see a little piece of seaweed floating on the surface. (The teleportal opened for a few moments before the PC entered the room.) If the tub is empty when the teleportal opens, it will fill with seawater. The tub radiates strong alteration magic.

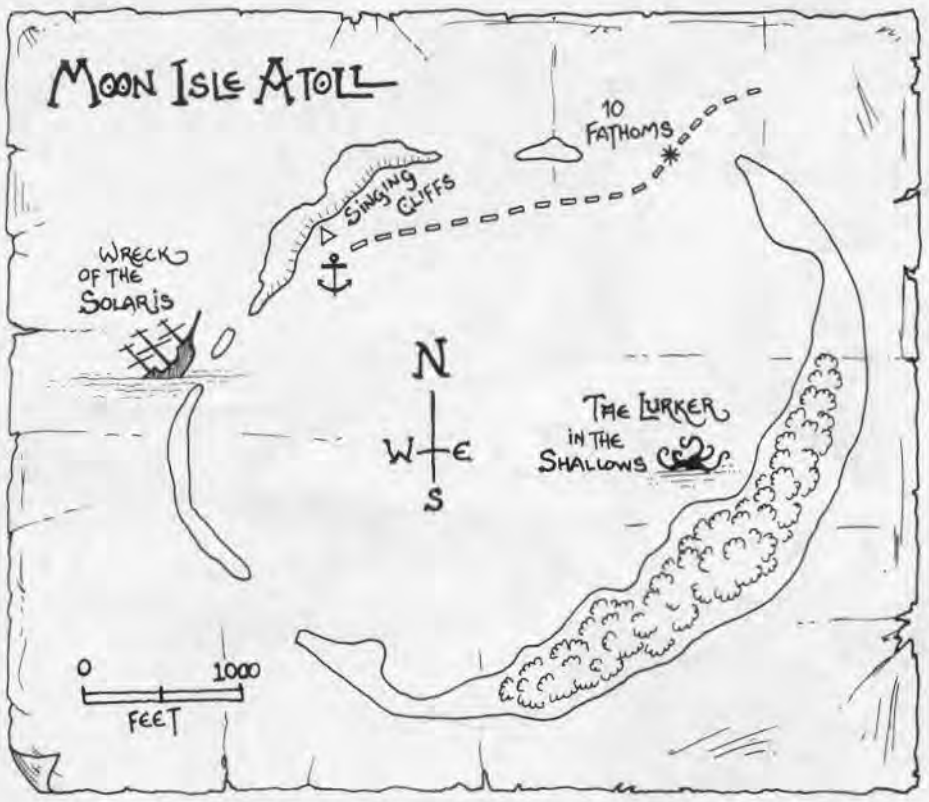
Nbod's Teleportals

When activated, a teleportal is seen as a dim field of translucent green light through which the PC may pass freely. Traveling through a teleportal moves the PC from one place to the other through a hole in space. The transferral is instantaneous but without any feeling of disorientation or of swift movement. Light, sounds, and even odors may pass through an open teleportal, as there seems to be a direct physical connection—a doorway—between the two places.

The teleportals may be opened from either side, though from the "outside" there is no physical object to distinguish where the opening might be. The teleportal's location is simply a point in space that, when the gateway is open, appears as a green field of light.

The chest, the wardrobe, and the copper tub, though bolted to the floor, may be detached and moved to relocate the teleportals.

A strange old man who lives on Moon Isle Atoll knows the command word for the sea chest. The other two command words were lost with Nbod. However, the words may be learned by other means. A careful research of local legal or shipping records will reveal that three of Nbod's former ships were the *Grindstaff,* the *Conundrum,* and the *Maybelle*; the *Maybelle*'s name is also painted into the scene of the oil painting in Nbod's room. For game purposes, a PC looking for general information on Nbod can find the ships' names in a day of searching the records, along with information on Nbod's arrests, successes, and misfortunes. A PC who inquires specifically for the names of Nbod's ships can obtain this information in an hour. However, there is no guarantee that the PC will associate the names of the ships with the command words for the teleportals. A Wisdom check may be required to make this leap of logic. Without the command words, the teleportals could not be used at all were it not for a peculiarity of their construction.



As a notorious pirate captain, Nbod earned many enemies who seemed to always be trying to kill or arrest him. He grew weary of having to make dashing escapes and always having to guard his back whenever he took a bath or changed clothes, so he commissioned a wizard to make three teleportals for him as "escape hatches." However, the wizard either skimped on materials or was not as talented as he claimed to be, because the *permanency* spells he cast to complete the enchantments never really took hold. Since that time, the enchantments have deteriorated.

At the time of this adventure, the teleportals sometimes open of their own accord, seemingly at random. There is a 10% chance per hour (not cumulative) that one or more of the teleportals will open.

Even knowing the command words does not guarantee that the portals will open. There is only a 90% chance that the sea chest or the wardrobe will open when the proper command word is used. The bathtub has grown so useless that it opens on command only 10% of the time. Also, every time a teleportal opens, there is a 5% chance that it will open to a random place somewhere on the Prime Material plane (at the discretion of the DM).

Regardless of how they are triggered, the wardrobe and the sea chest each

remain open for 1-6 turns. The bathtub opens for only 1-6 rounds. An open teleportal may be closed by speaking its command word, with the same odds for success as when opening the portal.

Paths to Adventure

Once the PC is comfortably settled into the room and is prepared for nearly anything to happen after listening to all the rumors, the DM should allow a period of exploration. During this time, Captain Nbod will make his presence felt.

Captain Nbod (poltergeist): INT low; AL LE; AC 10; MV 6; HD ½; hp 3; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg nil; SA fear; SD *invisibility,* silver or magical weapons to hit; SZ M (6′ tall); ML 10; XP 120; MM/296.

The spirit of Captain Nbod took the form of a poltergeist at the moment of his death. He actually died in his room, though his bones lie elsewhere (see area 9). He is bonded to the room and rarely travels more than 100′ from it. However, his range extends down the hall of the inn as well as into other rooms, and even to the floor below if Nbod's room is on the second floor. He cannot, however, pass through the teleportals because of the distances traveled during teleportation.

Sometimes, the poltergeist takes no notice of people entering or leaving the room. At other times his wrath is strong, and anyone who dares to spend the night in his room will soon feel his eerie presence. The PC arrives at just such a time.

Nbod's spirit may be used to lead the PC in a certain direction, such as discovering an important clue in the room. His high jinks serve especially well to scare the daylights out of the PC and to add flavor to the adventure. He never actually attacks the PC, but he can moan hauntingly, shake the bed, slam doors, and knock things off tables. The captain cannot communicate in the normal ways, but he can answer questions by performing specific actions. For example, if the PC asks the spirit's name, Nbod removes his portrait from the wall and floats it before the PC's face. (The captain was never known for subtlety.) As a poltergeist, he is invisible at all times and cannot be seen except by magical means. Therefore, he is not the source of the ghost sightings (see "The Temple" below for the culprit).

The only way to end Nbod's hauntings is to slay the sea hag who murdered him (see area 9) and to bury his bones in a proper place, preferably at sea. If the poltergeist is destroyed by other means, he re-forms and goes on a haunting rampage for 1-4 days.

If the PC refuses to act on the clues and hooks of the adventure, the DM shouldn't force the issue. If things are going badly, see "The Reluctant Player Character" on page 19.

The Temple

The PC will get very little sleep tonight. Sometime during the night, preferably after the PC has gone to bed, the teleportal in the wardrobe opens. An evil priest named Zoon Quag has been sitting at the other side of the portal waiting for just such an opportunity. He has disguised himself as Captain Nbod in order to inspire terror in anyone he might meet. He enters the room through the wardrobe and immediately tries to use his *wand of metal and mineral detection* to find the *leviathan dagger*. If the PC has fallen asleep, Zoon will find the dagger. If the PC is awake and is not frightened, Zoon will try to use his spells (such as *cause fear* or *command*) to frighten or disable the PC. In any case, the PC should be awakened by some small noise just in time to see Zoon holding the *leviathan dagger* (which glows green in the dark) before he reenters the wardrobe.

Zoon Quag: AL LE; AC 6; MV 12; C4; hp 22; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 14, D 10, C 13, I 12, W 14, Ch 14; ML 12; XP 270; *war hammer +1, bracers of defense AC6, wand of metal and mineral detection,* unholy symbol, prayer book. Weapon proficiencies: war hammer, trident. Nonweapon proficiencies: navigation, spellcraft, disguise, seamanship. Spells: *command, cause light wounds, cause fear; augury, obscurement.*

Zoon once served aboard Captain Nbod's pirate ship. The priest was discharged when Nbod caught him sacrificing captives whom the captain had planned to hold for ransom. Just before his dismissal, Zoon learned that the captain had obtained a powerful magical dagger, and he has been seeking this item ever since.

Zoon is the real source of the ghost sightings in the inn. About a year ago, the evil priest discovered a teleportal that led from his temple to the wardrobe in Nbod's room, and since that time he has

been vainly searching for the dagger throughout the inn. Zoon doesn't know the command word that opens the teleportal and so has spent many a long, fruitless night waiting for the gateway to open. Recently, Zoon hired a big strapping fellow named Thimb (see area 1) to do the watching for him and to guard his retreat, should he need help.

Some people, including Mola Hitchman, have seen Zoon ghosting around the inn at night, but because he disguised himself as Captain Nbod, he has been mistaken for a spirit. Recently, however, he acquired a *wand of metal and mineral detection* that he hopes will locate the *leviathan dagger*.

Undisguised, Zoon Quag is of medium height, heavily built with powerful arms. He is bald and has a shark tattooed on his scalp. Although he is only 35 years old, his skin is well tanned and leathery from years spent at sea. Zoon worships an evil demigod or demigoddess of the sea, such as Umberlee in the Forgotten Realms.

If the PC is quick to prevent Zoon from escaping, the priest calls to Thimb (in area 1) for assistance.

If the PC investigates the wardrobe while the teleportal is open, read or paraphrase the following to the player.

> Beyond the open doors, the back of the wardrobe seems to be missing, replaced by a field of translucent green light. Through the glow, you can see a large room lit palely from above, but you cannot see the source of the light, nor can you tell how high the ceiling might be.
>
> You hear a low, murmuring drone—like a chant or incantation spoken in unison by several voices—coming from somewhere within the room. Just as you think you can make out the words, a door booms shut, cutting off the voices. For a moment, a moist breeze blows from the wardrobe, bringing to you the scent of fish.

If the PC defeated Zoon before he could escape, the door does not boom shut. The glow comes from patches of fungi growing high up the 50′ walls.

1. The Pool. Whether Zoon escaped (with or without the *leviathan dagger*) or the PC defeated the evil priest, a brave adventurer worthy of that name should decide to investigate beyond the glowing portal, which will close in 1-6 turns. When the PC steps through the teleportal, read or paraphrase the following to the player:

> As your eyes adjust to the dim light, you notice a large pool in the middle of a large, low-ceilinged chamber. The waters are dark and murky; it appears that something is alive in there by the swirls that occasionally appear on the water's surface. That something—whatever it is—must be very dangerous. Dangling above the pool from a chain, an iron cage holds a human skeleton whose flesh has recently been stripped to the bone. Ragged bits of skin and hair still cling to the remains of the unfortunate victim.
>
> Your eyes follow the chain until it is lost in shadows above, but you spot it again as it descends to a large crank attached to the east wall. This wall, like the others—you now notice—is painted with fantastic murals of frolicking nymphs dancing with flute in hand around ugly leering centaurs. The depictions are brazenly lifelike and painstakingly detailed.
>
> On the far side of the pool, low steps lead down into the water. Once bathers might have relaxed here, but now you wonder to what doom these steps lead.

Captain Nbod once owned this bath house and the tavern above it, located in another part of the same town as his inn room. Wealthy merchants and tradesmen seeking distraction could find a relaxing hour in the pool or in one of the small private rooms (area 2). After Nbod disappeared, the bartender, Ferd Dench, took over the tavern and bath house. The employees of the bath house had never liked Dench, and when he began to sample his own wares, they all quit. Unable to make a living, Dench sold the building to Zoon Quag and his band of followers, who promptly turned the lower level into a temple to their evil god. Zoon retained the bartender to operate the tavern as a front, and Dench, for his own well-being, decided not to pursue any complaint.

The pool of sacrifice is filled with quippers, a kind of cool-water piranha. Anyone entering the pool will be stripped of flesh within minutes.

Quippers (30): INT non; AL N; AC 8; MV swim 9; HD ½; hp 2 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2; SA swarm; SZ T (8″-10″ long); ML 6; XP 7; MM/117 (Fish).

Luckily, Zoon has yet to install any traps that might flip an unwelcome visitor into the deadly waters. But he does have Thimb to guard his retreat, and Thimb is lurking in the gloom of the southwest corner ready to pounce when the PC enters.

Thimb: AL LE; AC 10; MV 12; F2; hp 16; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 18/69, D 10, C 15, I 7, W 7, Ch 12; ML 14; XP 65; club, pouch containing 6 sp. Weapon proficiencies: club, staff, battle axe, morningstar.

Thimb likes to go shirtless so everyone can see his muscles. Zoon pays him 6 sp a week to watch the magical portal and to be his bodyguard. Thimb does not particularly care for the god Zoon worships, but he loves to see people thrown to the quippers.

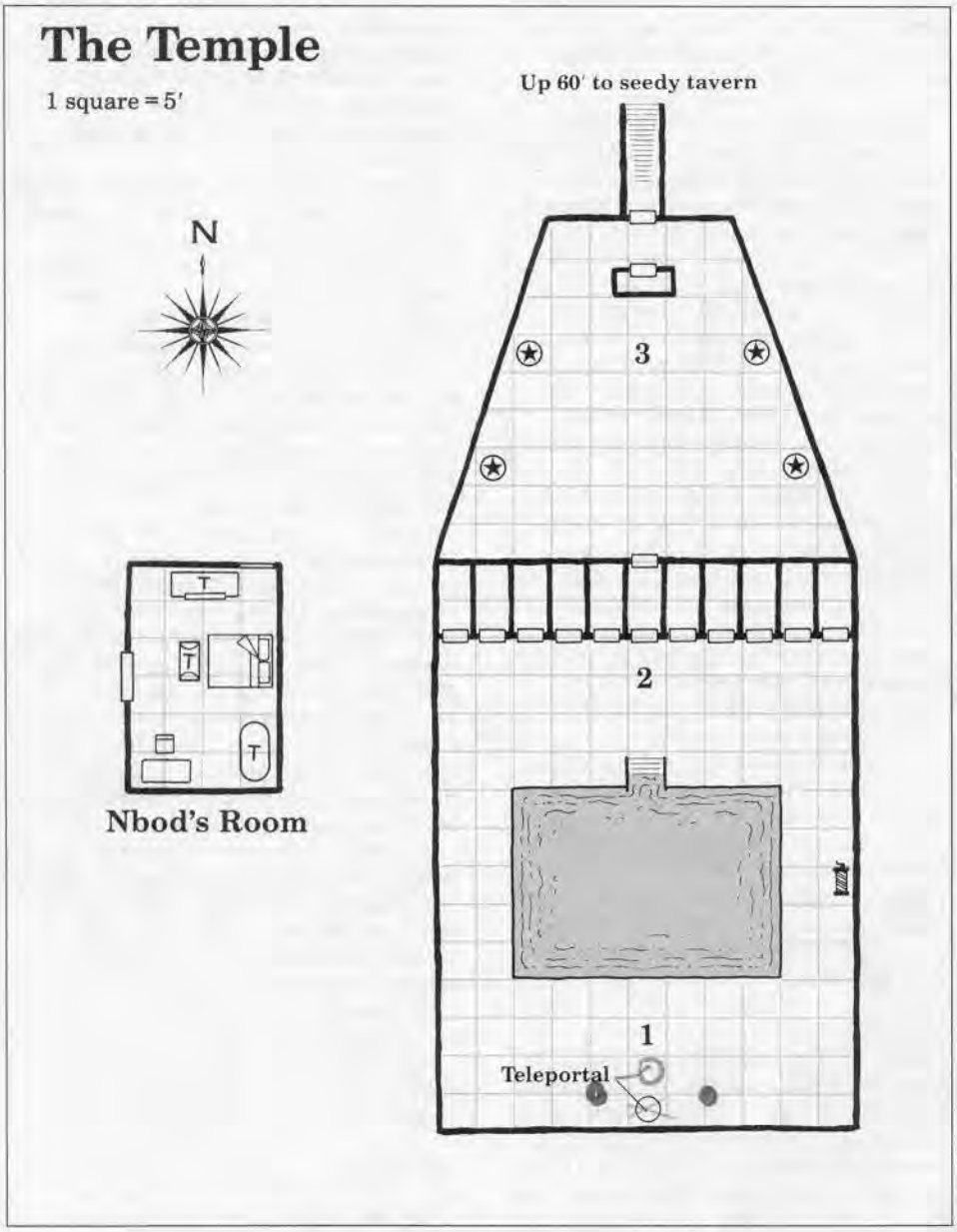
Thimb is so confident in his own strength that he might forego his attack with the club (if the PC is small) and attempt to grapple. In any case, his main battle tactic is to force the PC into the pool, either by attacking with his club or by wrestling and throwing. With his club, this simply requires an attack roll of 4 or more than the number required to hit. When wrestling, Thimb must make a successful attack roll and must also gain a trip, throw, or any twist result to throw a PC into the pool (see *Player's Handbook*, page 97). His wrestling damage always includes his +5 Strength bonus. He has no plan for dealing with more than one person coming through the teleportal.

Thimb allows a few moments to pass before attacking, so that the PC can move well into the room and closer to the pool. He then tries to move in for a sudden attack from behind.

2. Doors

> The far wall of the pool chamber is lined with eleven ornate wooden doors, but the beauty of the wood has been marred by the inept installation of heavy iron locks that look sturdy enough to withstand any blow. As you approach this area, you hear the faint sound of chanting.

All the doors except the one in the middle are locked and open on prison cells. Chains and manacles have been bolted into the walls and floor. The cells are all empty except for an occasional memento left by some former occupant: a scrap of clothing or a tin plate with a gnawed bone on it.



The chanting comes from behind the center door, which opens into a short hall that ends in another door.

3. Hall of Darkness. Until the PC's arrival, no one has ever pursued Zoon during his "hauntings"; everyone who saw him was too terrified to do anything. However, if the PC has been hot on Zoon's trail, making a lot of noise and causing trouble, forego the scenario given below and have Zoon and his followers ready for battle. Read or paraphrase the following to the player only if Zoon is not aware that the PC has followed him.

> You open the second door, and the droning litany becomes very loud. In front of you, a long, wide hall narrows toward the far end. Two tall, hideous statues of alien, ichthyoid humans stand along each side wall, staring with dull, fishlike eyes.
>
> The hall is dimly lit by a bank of black candles atop a low altar positioned 5′ in front of the north wall. Behind the altar, a black-robed figure chants his evil prayer while eight worshipers, similarly cloaked in ebon robes and lost in the ecstacy of their worship, kneel and pound their foreheads against the floor. The priest, if priest he is, holds a strange wavy-bladed dagger before him, presenting it to his groveling congregation.

Zoon is in the midst of casting an *augury* spell. If the PC interrupts the ceremony by making any loud noise or performing an overt action (such as attacking), the priest abandons the *augury* spell and orders his worshipers to attack. He backs them up with his spells, but he will not engage in physical combat unless his congregation is being beaten. If things continue to go badly, Zoon casts his *obscurement* spell and flees through the door in the north wall. The door opens into a small area from which a normal stairway leads up 60′ to a tavern.

Worshipers (8): AL LE; AC 7; MV 12; F2; hp 16, 13, 12, 11, 10, 9, 8, 7; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 11; XP 35; leather armor, horseman's mace, shield.

If the worshipers are seriously challenged by the PC or fail a morale check, they call out to Zoon Quag for aid. If he fails them, they follow him up the stairs as he flees.

The treasure horde of this small sect of worshipers is hidden in a secret cache within the altar. It contains a sack of 60 gp, 24 sp, a silver ring worth 10 gp, and a potion of *healing*.

A PC who becomes trapped here by the closing of the magical portal at area 1 can climb the stairs to the tavern above. Little help is available from the tavern's patrons, though, for it is a place filled with rogues and other low-life scum. A PC who asks questions about the priest or his followers will be answered with lies at best, and possibly threats.

From the tavern, the PC can easily find the way back to the inn.

If Zoon managed to escape with the *leviathan dagger*, the adventure is not over. However, the PC has lost a powerful magical item as well as a bargaining tool for dealing with the headhunters on Moon Isle Atoll (area 6) and Brinea, the sea hag (area 9).

Moon Isle Atoll

Later in the night, if the PC has not found a more peaceful place to rest:

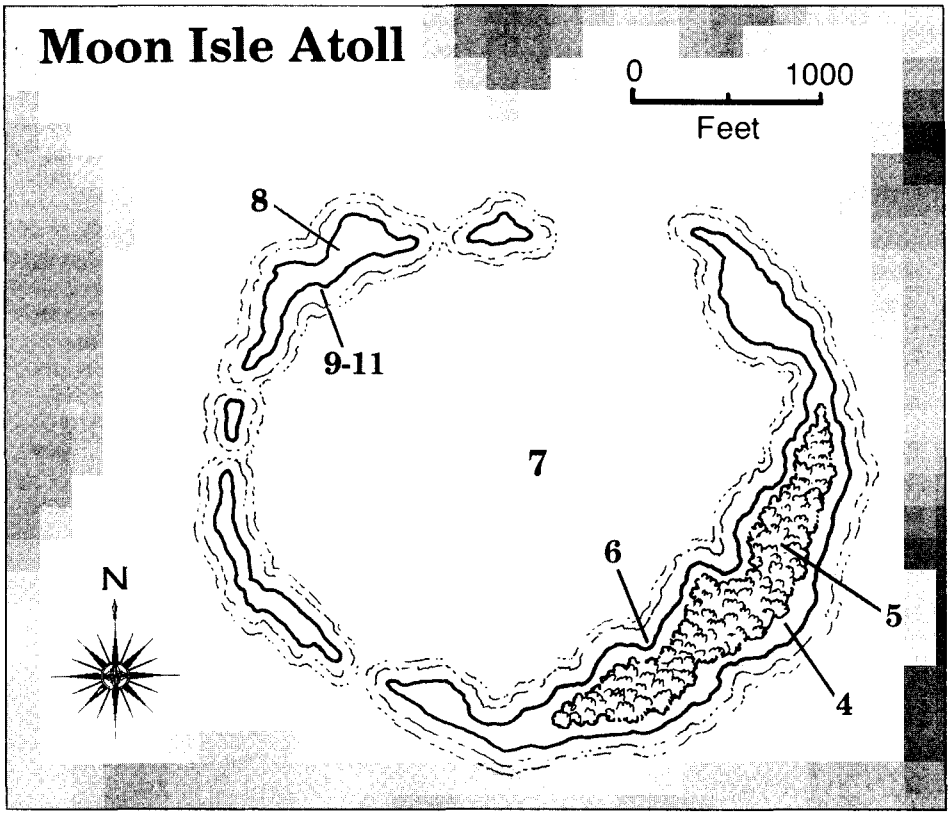
> A strange sound rises from the sea chest at the foot of the bed. It is the rush and surge of waves lapping on some beach. At the same time, you hear the cry of gulls, and very faintly the chattering of monkeys!
>
> And then, like thunder in the distance, a drum begins to beat out a primal rhythm that vibrates the floor.

The sounds are muffled if the chest is closed, but if the lid is open, it is as though a jungle is within the room. If the PC looks into the chest, its bottom appears to have vanished, replaced by a faint field of translucent green light. The PC can look down through the glow onto a patch of white sand 12' below. A crab is scuttling across the sand when a wave surges up the beach and washes it away. The rope ladder stowed in the lid of the chest (see page 10) will come in handy if the PC decides to explore the beach.

4. A Distant Beach. A PC who climbs down (or drops) through the teleportal in the chest is magically whisked to a tropic isle (Moon Isle Atoll) thousands of miles away. Once on the beach, the PC can see the other side of the portal as a rectangle of green light floating 12' above the sand. Like the other teleportals in this adventure, this one may be opened from either side using its command word. However, once closed, the invisible floating portal may not be so easy to find. Footprints in the sand will be quickly washed away by the waves, so the spot must be marked if the PC hopes to find the right location again. The rope ladder is sucked back up into the chest when the portal closes.

When the PC enters the teleportal, read or paraphrase the following to the player:

> You find yourself dangling above a beach, with warm waves lapping below your feet. Somewhere to the west, beyond the shadow of the forest that skirts the beach, the strange drum is pounding, filling the dusk with its sound and speaking of barbaric rituals held under the protective cover of darkness.
>
> Some distance to the south, you notice a large mass of dark objects lying just out of reach of the waves. They might be boats, or they might be large animals of some sort, perhaps sea monsters, that have been drawn from the water by the sound of the drum.
>
> The sun sinks below the western horizon, and darkness falls quickly in this place. A multitude of stars wink to life in the indigo sky.



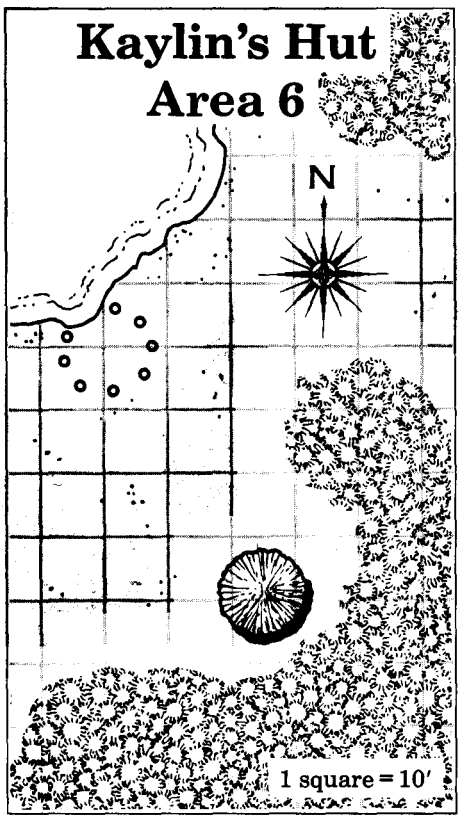
About 200 yards down the beach, nine large outrigger canoes are pulled up onto the sand. No one guards the canoes. If the PC decides to take a canoe and escape the island, that is another adventure, perhaps even another campaign.

5. Through the Forest Primeval. A wide trail of footprints leads away from the canoes and into the forest. (The footprints, like the canoes, are out of reach of the waves.) By starlight, the trail is easy to follow. The footprints lead to a small hut at area 6.

Although random encounters are not recommended for this adventure, the DM may add them to increase the danger. In this case, the trek through the forest is an excellent place for a monster to meet one of the creatures that live on the island: wild pigs, monkeys, bats, minotaur lizards, large snakes (poisonous and nonpoisonous), or large spiders. Natural hazards include quicksand or pit traps and snares set by the island's inhabitants to catch wild pigs.

6. Kaylin's Hut. As the PC approaches this area, the drumming grows louder and more frenzied. Light from torches and a bonfire flickers through the thick foliage. The chance of encountering a headhunter in the area immediately surrounding Kaylin's hut is 1 in 6 per turn. Headhunters are described below.

> Through the trees, you see moonlight rippling on a wide, dark lagoon, but the night has been chased away by a large fire over which roasts a sizable pig. Torches on tall poles are arranged in a semicircle near the water. Within the boundary of the torchlight, you see five natives, wearing only hideous smiles, gesticulating wildly to the beat of a large drum.
>
> Outside the circle of the torches sits a wizened old man clad in only a dirty loincloth, who pounds out a frenzied rhythm on his drum. Sur-



rounding him are six tribal elders bedecked in feathered finery and seashell bangles. Some of them wear shrunken heads strung about their necks like pearls—hideous jewelry indeed.

Sprawled about on the sand near the fire and gorging themselves on roasted pig, a score or more naked headhunters intently watch the dance of the five warriors.

The actions of the PC are critical. If the PC is discovered, the headhunters will rush out and hunt the intruder relentlessly. There is nowhere to hide where the headhunters cannot find the PC, whose shrunken head is destined to adorn someone's lodge pole.

However, if the PC waits until the attack of the Lurker (see below), things may go differently. Or, if the PC brandishes the *leviathan dagger*, the headhunters will grovel in abject terror before it. (See "The *Leviathan Dagger*" on page 39.)

Elders (6): AL CN; AC 10; MV 12; F1; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 10; XP 65 each; knife, club, jewelry of feathers and shells worth 50 gp per elder.

Headhunters (25): AL CN; AC 10; MV 12; F1; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 13; XP 65 each; blow gun, 6 poisoned darts (type D, 30/2-12); spear; jewelry of feathers and shells worth 10 gp per warrior.

The headhunters have come to observe a rite of passage for five aspiring warriors (the dancers). The drumming and ritual dancing serves to call a monster from the sea. If the all-knowing sea (which the headhunters worship) finds the warriors worthy, it will send a peaceful monster, but if the sea judges that the warriors must prove themselves, it will send something to attack them.

The headhunters will react with hostility if the PC is spotted during their ritual. The six tribal elders do not engage in combat unless they have no other choice.

Read or paraphrase the following to the player if the PC has not been discovered after one turn of watching the dance.

As you wait and watch, the drum reaches a frenzied crescendo. The five dancers fling their bodies about in the most astounding feats of athleticism you have ever seen. Beyond them, the still water of the lagoon has begun to bubble and froth. The other headhunters move closer to the water, perhaps to get a better look at what is rising there.

Suddenly, chaos erupts. Huge black tentacles shoot from the water, wrapping around two of the dancers and dragging them screaming into the shadowy depths. Other tentacles sway high in the air as if looking for targets. Most of the savages flee in terror, leaving only a small knot of three warriors who brandish their spears and refuse to give up.

The creature attacking the headhunters is a giant octopus. They have little hope of defeating it.

Lurker in the Shallows (giant octopus): INT animal; AL N(E); AC 7; MV 3, swim 12; HD 8; hp 60; THAC0 13; #AT 7; Dmg 1-4(×6)/2-12; SA constriction; SD ink, color change; SZ L (18' diameter); ML 13; XP 2,000; MM/271.

Two of the dancers were dragged to their deaths in the first attack. If the PC does nothing, the other three will soon follow. The old man who plays the drum quickly moves away from the water when the Lurker attacks, but he remains to watch the outcome of the battle. If the PC enters the fray, lending a hand to the embattled headhunters, their reaction changes to neutral after the melee has ended. Any natives left alive leave the area without a word of thanks. The headhunters who fled at the start of the battle will wait at their outrigger canoes for one hour for any stragglers or surviving dancers before departing for their own island, some distance to the east.

The wizened old man playing the drum is named Kaylin. When the Lurker strikes, Kaylin retreats to the safety of his hut and watches the battle from the doorway. If he is able, he will provide food and shelter for the PC in his hut once the battle is over.

Kaylin: AL N; AC 9; MV 12; B5; hp 20; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 9, D 12, C 10, I 16, W 12, Ch 15; CW 65%, DN 40%, PP 40%, RL 35%; dagger, *ring of protection +1*. Special abilities: influence reactions, inspire with music, counter song used as magical attack. Weapon proficiencies: dagger, short bow, harpoon. Nonweapon proficiencies: set snares, fishing, seamanship, local history. Spells: *identify, mending, unseen servant; invisibility.*

Kaylin lives alone in a small hut on Moon Isle Atoll. He is very old, over 60 years of age. He was an old friend of Nbod and knows what became of the pirate captain. Once he himself was a pirate, but he grew tired of the bloody pillage and murder. When his ship, the *Solaris*, wrecked on the reef at the west side of Moon Isle Atoll, he decided to stay behind while his shipmates built canoes and escaped. It was here that he met Captain Nbod many years ago. After their initial meeting, Nbod made Moon Isle Atoll one of his hideouts and would often stop by for a visit when he came to refresh his supplies. After Nbod bought his teleportals, his visits became more frequent.

One day several years ago, Nbod showed up and asked to borrow Kaylin's canoe so that he could reach a sea cave beneath the Singing Cliffs on the other side of the island. According to the captain, he had a good bit of money hidden in the cave, but the teleportal set for that location had ceased functioning properly. Kaylin went along to help Nbod remove the treasure, but as they approached the cave, something

attacked their canoe. Nbod fell overboard and never resurfaced.

Kaylin will treat the PC with kindness if kindness is shown to him. If the PC is hostile, he will not stick around to be bullied. He can use his spells to escape and has a canoe hidden nearby in which he can travel to other parts of the island. His musical instrument of choice is the drum; sometimes people from other islands ask him to play for their religious rituals. He shares his island with a number of monsters that he has learned to avoid, and he can help the PC bypass some of the dangers. Kaylin does not know that a sea hag makes her lair in a cave under the Singing Cliffs. (See area 9.)

Kaylin doesn't know the exact location of the teleportal on the beach. Although he knows the command word ("Conundrum") from overhearing Nbod, he has never tried to use it because he is perfectly happy living alone on his island. He knows that the teleportal in the sea cave (area 10) no longer functions properly, but he does not know its command word. Kaylin has no interest in money and cannot be bribed, nor can he be tempted to leave the island. He has no desire for adventure, but he might be persuaded to come along to protect the PC from the harpies living in the Singing Cliffs. He knows all the information in the sidebar "The *Leviathan Dagger*" except any information about Zoon Quag.

If the PC persuades Kaylin to offer shelter, read or paraphrase the following to the player as the adventurer arrives at the bard's hut:

> This tiny little hovel has been built over a bare, sandy floor. There is but one entrance, a doorway that opens to the north, and there are no windows. The roof is made of palm fronds, as are the walls, all supported by bamboo poles.
>
> Scattered at random across the floor are the following objects: an unfinished wooden drum, a rickety little table with some bananas on top of it, a clay jar filled with fresh water, a simple pallet of palm fronds, a small chest, a harpoon, and a fishing net.

The chest in the hut contains only personal possessions: some old clothes, a pair of sandals, a knife. Buried in the sand beneath the pallet is a potion of *extra healing* and Kaylin's small traveling spellbook.

7. The Lurker in the Shallows. Anyone who dares to cross the lagoon by night is subject to attack by the Lurker in the Shallows, a giant octopus of a very bold and nasty disposition that seems to always be hungry. (See area 6 for statistics.) However, if the monster was killed or severely injured during the battle at Kaylin's hut, a night crossing of the lagoon should be relatively safe.

During the day, the monster stays in its lair, an underwater cave that can easily be found by the number of giant clam shells scattered around the mouth. In addition to seafood of the larger variety, the Lurker has dined on a few humanoids in its time. Mixed in with the discarded shells of giant clams, giant lobsters, and giant crabs may be found the following items; a gold chain (100 gp), two gold bracelets studded with emeralds (1,000 gp each), and a strand of pearls (200 gp).

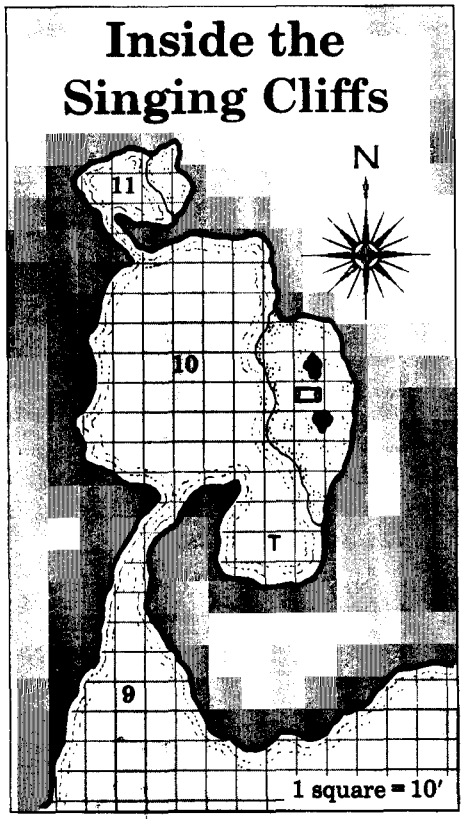
8. The Singing Cliffs. Long ago, Moon Isle Atoll was a volcano. In one devastating blast, the island was blown apart, leaving only an outer ring of land to mark its former existence. One section of this land stands taller than the rest, a great outcrop of sheer rock rising over 100′ in the air.

The Singing Cliffs are so named because, when the wind blows from the east, it whistles through the caves that dot the face of the cliffs, making an eerie sound that can only imaginatively be described as singing.

Anyone who dares to cross the lagoon by day is subject to attack by the harpies who live on the cliffs, another reason why the cliffs are known to sing.

Harpies (2): INT low; AL CE; AC 7; MV 6, fly 15 (C); HD 7; hp 45, 33; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA singing and *charm;* SZ M; ML 13; XP 975; MM/184.

The harpies leave Kaylin alone because he is poor, scrawny, and not very appetizing. Besides, he can use his bardic abilities to counter the effect of their *charm,* and this frightens them. Their lair lies high up the cliffs in a small, foul-smelling cave. Among the incredible amount of refuse there may be found the following treasure: 1,250 cp; 400 sp; three gems worth 740 gp, 200 gp, and 110 gp; and an *ioun stone* (clear spindle, sustains person without food or water).



If the PC has the little balls of wax that were hidden in the *portable hole* in Nbod's room, they might come in handy for a day crossing of the lagoon. Using them to plug his ears improves the PCs saving throw against the harpies' song by +6.

9. The Sea Cave. The entrance to this cave can be reached only by swimming, by canoe, or by descending from the cliffs. The cave itself can be entered only by water. At the entrance to the cave, the roof is only 3' above the water. A PC who without a light source will be extremely vulnerable to sudden attack in the darkness of the cave. Read or paraphrase the following to the player as the PC approaches the cave entrance.

> You see before you a gaping fissure in the cliff. At the back, there appears to be a small cave entrance, partially submerged and choked with seaweed. It looks large enough to get through, but it is very dark inside.
>
> The seaweed catches at your arms and legs as your passage disturbs things living in the water. You see swirls and wakes in the seaweed as myriad tiny creatures flee your approach. After a tight squeeze and a slight turn, the cave opens out into a large vaulted cavern.

10. Teleportal Cavern.

> Part of the cave floor is above water, a sandy place where two large boulders sit. Between the boulders, you see a large iron-bound chest. The lid is open and the chest's contents glitter in the light. Atop the heap of treasure sits a badly decayed human head with a wispy beard and flowing gray hair. Scattered about the place are other human bones.

If the PC has the *leviathan dagger*, Brinea the sea hag who lives here will sense the dagger's presence and immediately attack. In any case, unless the PC is very quiet, Brinea will come to investigate the invader of her home.

Brinea (sea hag): INT average; AL CE; AC 7; MV 12, swim 15; HD 3; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 7-10 or by weapon type; SA deadly glance, strength; SD *change self*; MR 50%; SZ M; ML 11; XP 1,400; MM/181-182; dagger.

Brinea is the powerful sea creature from whom Captain Nbod stole the *leviathan dagger*. Her lust for the magical blade drove her to search for him, and eventually she found him on Moon Isle Atoll. As he and Kaylin crossed the lagoon in a small canoe, Brinea attacked and Nbod fell overboard. But he was a powerful warrior long used to battles in the water, and so she had a tougher time than she had anticipated.

Nbod nearly escaped her in the sea cave when he activated a teleportal on the cave's floor, but Brinea pursued him through the portal and killed him in his room at the inn. She then dragged him back to her lair in the sea cave, but the portal closed before she could return to the room and search it for the *leviathan dagger*.

Nbod did not have the dagger in his possession, and so she has waited these years in the cave, trying to reopen the portal with no success. Occasionally, the teleportal opens by itself, but as it remains open for only a short period of time, she has been reluctant to pass through it for fear of being trapped on the other side. She hopes that, sooner or later, someone will open the teleportal and pass through. Then she can learn the command word (she has ways to make people talk) and use the portal safely.

Several years ago, Brinea investigated Kaylin's hut on the other side of the island but found nothing of interest. She does not feel threatened by Kaylin and, as his presence attracts natives from other islands (thereby providing her with easy meals), she has not bothered him.

Brinea's sole motivation is the recovery of the *leviathan dagger*. The weapon is a threat to her and her kind; until it is safely hidden or destroyed, she will not rest. She will not allow a PC who has the dagger to escape alive. She may attempt to bargain with a powerful PCs, but only to lure the adventurer into a false sense of security. To do this, she may use her *change self* ability. She assumes that anyone who comes through the teleportal must in some way be connected with Nbod, so she will use her *change self* ability to mimic the captain himself.

The treasure chest contains 160 sp, 200 gp, 11 gems totaling 3,000 gp, six pieces of jewelry totaling 2,500 gp, and a *cutlass +3*.

The head and bones are the remains of Captain Nbod, victim of the revenge and ravenous appetite of the sea hag. Careful examination of the head reveals a diamond ear ring worth 1,000 gp. The key to the sea chest (see page 10) can be found among Nbod's bones and tattered bits of his garments.

The magical portal lies on the floor of the cave in the smaller chamber to the south, submerged beneath 12' of water. When the portal is open, green light filters up through the thick seaweed covering the surface of the water. This teleportal leads to the copper bathtub in Nbod's room.

The sea hag will never allow the PC to pass through the portal unless she is severely wounded or has failed a morale check. As described on page 11, this teleportal has a only a 10% chance to open in any given round, even if the command word is spoken. It will remain open for only 1-6 rounds. However, for the sake of a dramatic and memorable ending, if the PC is being soundly beaten by Brinea, the DM might open the portal and allow the PC a chance to escape.

Anyone engaged in melee suffers penalties for underwater combat as described in the *Dungeon Master Guide*, page 79, unless he or she has possession of the *leviathan dagger*. If the PC escapes

through the portal with the *leviathan dagger*, Brinea follows and attempt to renew the attack in Nbod's room. If the portal then closes, the sea hag is in real trouble, for she must somehow quickly find her way to the sea.

11. Brinea's Lair. The only way into this small cave is by an underwater tunnel (treat as a secret door) in the north wall of area 10. If encountered here, the sea hag attacks the moment the PC enters her lair.

> You surface in a small cave, the roof only 4' above the surface of the water. On a corner of dry land against the east wall you see a multitude of crabs crawling over the surface of the rock.

There is nothing of interest above water, and the crabs are harmless (other than their painful pinch). But below the surface, hidden in a nook and partially covered with loose stones, is the sea hag's secret treasure of 51 pearls totaling 2,120 gp.

The Reluctant Player Character

If a stubborn or terrified PC simply refuses to budge from Nbod's room—ignoring all opportunities for adventure, discovery, and loot—it may be necessary to take drastic measures. The following scenario has been provided to bring danger within the very room.

In the wee hours of the morning, the teleportal in the copper tub opens. Brinea, who can no longer resist the temptation of the *leviathan dagger*, swims through with the intention of searching the room. She rises up from the tub, salt water spraying everywhere and glittering eerily in the green light of the open teleportal, only to find the startled PC sitting up in bed. She will not be pleased, and the PC will be forced to do something, even if it is to run screaming in terror into the night, never to be seen again.

Concluding the Adventure

If the above scenario occurs, or if Brinea follows the PC through the teleportal, Nbod's poltergeist will do all he can to help the PC defeat the sea hag. If the PC has not yet found the *leviathan dagger*, Nbod removes it from its secret drawer and gives it to the PC. Brinea, faced with the spectral presence of Nbod as well as a determined PC, must save vs. paralyzation or flee through the teleportal (if it is still open). Thus the adventure is ended for the moment. Brinea may return to frighten some other poor soul from his bed in the middle of the night, although this could very well be the PC if he or she decides to stay on for a few more days.

However, the PC may end the adventure in any number of other ways. The adventurer may become trapped on Moon Isle Atoll or may simply decide to stay there, perhaps to take up bardic training under Kaylin. The teleportals on the beach and in the sea cave will always be there, opening randomly or on command, so escape is possible.

The DM may wish to leave other clues about the mysterious Captain Nbod, clues that can lead to further adventures. Ferd Dench, the bartender mentioned at area 1, might seek out the PC and request that something be done about Zoon Quag and his band of followers (if they have not already been dispatched). The activities of Zoon Quag hint at an underworld of forbidden cults practicing hideous rites. If Zoon escaped with the *leviathan dagger*, the PC may be asked by some powerful NPC (perhaps the priest of a faith that opposes Zoon's) to recover the powerful magical weapon.

If the PC is in possession of the *leviathan dagger* at the end of the adventure, it is an extra reward. The PC may sell it, give it away, or use it in further adventures. Remember, however, that magical or magic-using sea creatures can detect the dagger's presence (see sidebar), so further sea adventures could become hazardous. Selling the dagger may not be wise, for the dagger could show up to haunt later adventures.

Awarding Experience Points

In addition to normal awards for defeating monsters, clever play, and use of skills, award 2,000 XP for successfully protecting the *leviathan dagger* from everyone seeking it. If the PC is thoughtful enough to bury Nbod's bones, thereby ending the haunting of the inn, award 100 XP. The innkeeper Javius Noll might also offer some small reward (a fabulous dinner, free room and board for a week) for ridding him of Nbod's pesky "ghost." Ω

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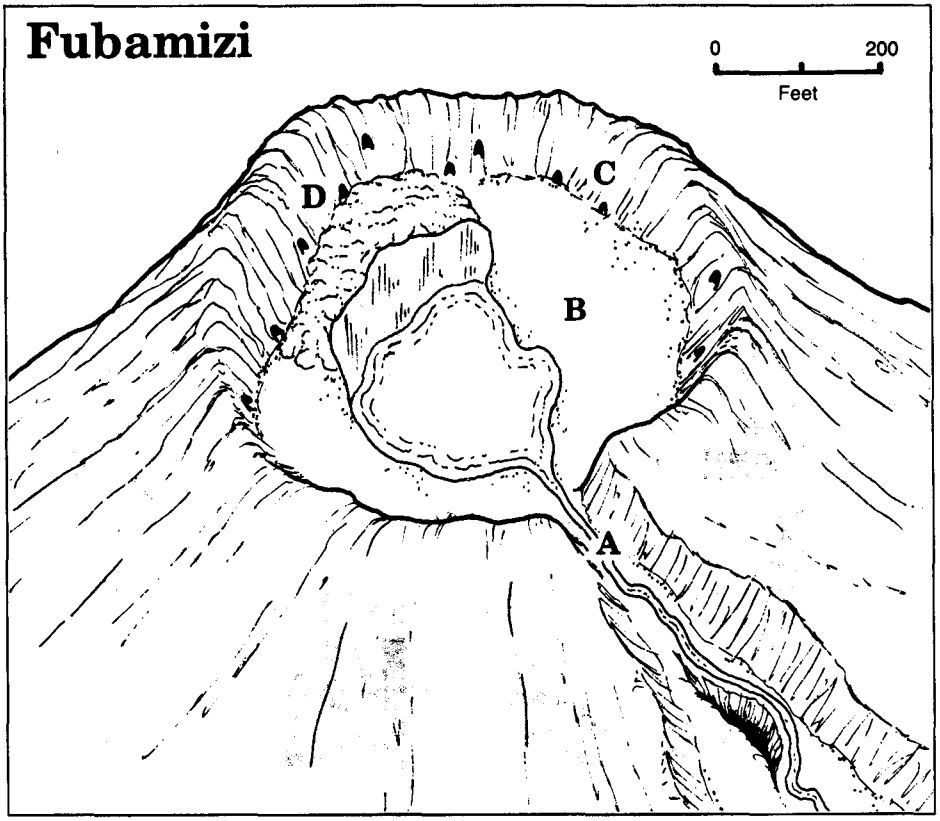


Whiter than Ivory, Colder than Snow

BY CHRIS HIND

"Journey to the Center-of-the-World" is an AD&D® SideTrek adventure for 4-6 player characters of levels 8-10 (about 45 total levels). Set in the tropics, this adventure could be an extended random encounter or a sequel to "Rogue" from DUNGEON® Magazine #34.

Adventure Background

Olaf Jenkinson hates the tropics. He resides in the trading post of Fort Thunder only to exploit the rich resources of this new land. But recently, the merchant acquired valuable information that could allow him, as he has been heard to say, "to leave this stinking, steaming jungle for good!" While trading with a Watanga chieftain, Jenkinson learned an important secret about the mountain called Fubamizi ("Center-of-the-World"). Unfortunately, Jenkinson's poor grasp of the Watanga language resulted in a misinterpretation. He translated "huge," "gray," and "flapping" correctly but mistranslated the Watanga word for "wings" as "ears." Mistaking the native's frantic gestures for "long neck" as a reference to an elephant's trunk, he concluded that Fubamizi holds an elephants' graveyard—a legendary site where old pachyderms go to die.

Jenkinson plans to recover the dead elephants' tusks and smuggle the ivory out of Fort Thunder by private ship, thus cheating the Merchant Brotherhood of its considerable cut. Having watched for capable, trustworthy adventurers, he quietly approaches the PCs.

The crafty merchant explains his proposal. The adventurers will travel to Fubamizi, clearing the path of obstacles and dangers. After evaluating the elephants' graveyard, they are to load up on tusks and return to Fort Thunder. If warranted, more extensive caravans will follow. Jenkinson provides one pack elephant, any supplies (within reason) that the PCs request, and rough directions to Fubamizi. He offers 100 gp up front and 10% of the value of any tusks recovered (up to 400 gp for one trip, considering a fully loaded pack elephant). Jenkinson also insists that the PCs sign an elaborate contract that clearly records their agreement.

For the Dungeon Master

The Watanga chieftain was not describing an elephants' graveyard, but the final resting place of dragons. Because dragons are not native to the region, the Watanga language lacks a word for this creature. The chieftain has seen but one dragon, which appeared to be gray.

Dragons live for many years. All but the elves believe them immortal. But even wyrms grow old and eventually die, if they survive sibling rivalry and dragon-slayers.

One lineage of dragons, known as the Progeny of Fulverm, follows a strange burial rite. When one of these great wyrms nears its life's end (at 1,400 to 1,500 years of age), it feels an irresistible urge to abandon its lair for a communal graveyard at the "Center-of-the-World," the legendary lair of Fulverm.

The Progeny trace their lineage into prehistory, before the various dragon species split from a common stock. A diverse lot, they vary tremendously in color and habitat. Yet they share one legacy: the Call of Fulverm.

Fubamizi

Fubamizi is easy to find. Seen on clear days from Fort Thunder's highest watchtower, it lies almost due west of the trading post. The journey takes roughly three days by foot or elephant back. For two days, the PCs trek west

TO THE OF-THE-WORLD

from coastal Fort Thunder along caravan routes through the jungle. On the third day, they exchange the tangled forest for undulating grassland. The DM may roll random encounters using the Tropical or Subtropical tables from the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®*.

Fubamizi is a jagged, blue-gray mountain rising from the plains. Even from a distance, the PCs can see a deep rift marring the southeastern ridge. This valley provides the only feasible route up the 15,000′ peak. (Climbing the cliffs would require 20 hours and 50 proficiency checks; see the *Player's Handbook,* pages 122-123.) While ascending the lower slopes toward the rift, the adventurers move from savanna through open forests of cedar and bamboo.

The rift valley is bleak except for tussock grasses and mosses sprouting from cracks. A stream trickles down the middle of the two-mile-long valley. In places, the gradually sloping rift becomes so narrow that the pack elephant (a smaller breed) can barely squeeze through. Thoughtful PCs may begin to doubt the elephants' graveyard theory.

A. Guardian Golem. Near the rift's upper end, the valley narrows to 10′. Here a 9′-tall statue straddles the stream, blocking progress. Chiseled from black volcanic rock into the shape of a man-ape, this stone golem was created a millennium ago by one of Fulverm's Progeny to ward off desecrators. If anyone approaches within 10′, the golem attacks. It refuses to chase fleeing opponents, returning instead to its starting position. Here the golem's feet rest in two 18″-long footprints, where it is instantly repaired (as if a *transmute mud to rock* spell had been cast). Fleshy beings who stand in the footprints must save vs. spells or transmute from flesh to stone.

Stone golem: INT non; AL N; AC 5; MV 6; HD 14; hp 60; THAC0 7; #AT 1; Dmg 3-24; SA cast *slow* spell at opponents within 10′ every other round, high Strength (22); SD +2 or better weapon to hit, immune to nearly all spells (*transmute rock to mud* slows it for 2-12 rounds; *transmute mud to rock* heals all damage; *stone to flesh* makes it vulnerable to normal weapons and damaging spells on the following round only); SZ L (9′ tall, 1 ton); ML 20; XP 8,000; MM/166.

B. Center-of-the-World. Fubamizi is actually an extinct volcano. An azure lake fills much of the shallow bowl that measures roughly 500′ across. The inner slopes are pocked by dozens of caves and strewn with rocks, patches of lichen, and 30′-tall giant flowers. At this altitude, the air is chilly. Indeed, PCs see snow and ice across the bowl, yet a weather sense proficiency check reveals that the temperature is above freezing. No elephant bones are visible.

C. Graves in the Caves. These caves are described in only general terms; the DM should feel free to elaborate. In addition to the many empty caves, 14 contain crumbled skeletons or scattered bone fragments. The adventurers cannot determine the species of animal that left these remains. They find no tusks. Another five caves hold intact skeletons. Any PC who passes an Intelligence check realizes that these are not elephant remains. Those who have seen a dragon before can identify the bones as those of large wyrms.

One cave contains the decomposing, immediately recognizable remains of a gold dragon. Fumes from this rotting carcass assail the PCs' nostrils. Those entering the cave must save vs. poison or suffer nausea for 1d4 + 1 rounds, during which time they move at half speed and cannot attack. Lodged in the dragon's decaying gullet is an aquamarine (worth 750 gp).

If the PCs scavenge though every cave (the better part of two days' work), they turn up 323 cp, 281 sp, 425 gp, 199 ep, 57 pp, and a plain brass *ring of regeneration.*

D. Dying Dragon. The PCs reach the final cave whenever the DM feels the time is right. It can be located at any point along the crater's inner surface, near snowdrifts and an icy patch of lake. The white dragon within is not quite dead, and its death throes may endanger unwary adventurers. Despite milky eyes and cataracts, Tundra cannot be surprised.

White dragons are the most cowardly of dragons but usually have little to fear—except for the inevitability of natural death. Despite an extended life, Tundra is unwilling to leave the material plane. Her first instinct is to bargain with the party, offering the location of her lair (and the riches it contains) in exchange for magical aid. However, PCs of this level are unlikely to have the appropriate resources to aid her, even if they wanted to. *Regeneration* or healing spells can only make her final days comfortable (and restore some of her majesty should the ungrateful wyrm decide to attack). A single *elixir of youth* would satisfy her. As a last resort, she would accept *reincarnation,* if the party happens to have access to such a spell.

The DM should determine whether Tundra fulfills her end of any bargain. She is fickle and cruel but may realize the benefit of a temporary alliance. Unhelpful or weak parties may find themselves the targets of her frustration. Tundra casts spells and breathes frost before closing for melee. She backs into a corner of the cave to protect her rear.

Tundra (white dragon great wyrm): INT average; AL CE; AC −2; MV 9, jump 3; HD 19; hp 83; THAC0 1; #AT 3 plus special; Dmg 1d6 + 6/1d6 + 6/2d8 + 6; SA spells, breath weapon (cone of frost 70′ long, 5′ at mouth, 25′ at base, doing 12d6 + 12 hp damage), rear kick (1d6 + 6 damage plus knockdown), two wing buffet attacks (1d6 + 6 damage plus knockdown) or tail slap (2d6 + 6 damage plus stunning vs. 12 targets); SD spells, *detect invisibility* (60′ radius), saving throws as 19th-level fighter, fear aura (150′ radius) at −4 save, immune to cold; MR 40%; SZ G (95′ body, 85′ tail); ML 15; XP 16,000 (modified); MM/69.

Spells (24th level of ability, once each per day): *chill touch, spectral force, fire trap, reverse gravity*; can also cast *ice walking* (once per day), *gust of wind, wall of fog,* and *freezing fog* (three times per day) as per all white dragons of great wyrm age.

Some of Tundra's hoard remains embedded in her scales: 24 cp, 36 sp, a raw chunk of blue quartz (worth 10 gp), a faceted smoky quartz mounted in a silver necklace (worth 70 gp), a flawlessly cut amethyst (worth 500 gp), and a diamond

Continued on page 44

AILAMERE'S LAIR

BY STEVE FETSCH

A search for the ghostly dragon of the Deadwaters

Artwork by Craig Huffman

During the last year, this adventure has had its own adventures. It's been lost in the mail, greatly expanded, lost from disk, reconstructed, resubmitted, revised, re-revised, and finally published. Steve is planning to start writing his next adventure as soon as he's treated for nervous exhaustion.

"Ailamere's Lair" is an AD&D® adventure that offers mid- to high-level player characters the challenge of encountering an unusual creature in an unusual way. A diverse group of 4-7 PCs of levels 6-9 is recommended (about 41 total levels), although this adventure is equally well suited for just one or two PCs of levels 12-15.

The Meeting

The adventure begins when a scholar by the name of Rondelle summons the party to her home in the bustling crossroads town of Greenglade. Rondelle may have posted a help-wanted notice, met the party through a mutual acquaintance, or approached them in a public place.

Rondelle is wise for her mere 40 years and is very agreeable in conversation, despite a touch of melancholy in her tone. She has been fascinated with dragons all her life, and until five years ago ardently sought them out to speak with, study, or slay (depending on her inclination—and the dragons'). She has compiled an extensive library of information on the powers, weaknesses, attitudes, and other lore of various breeds of dragonkind, as well as the locations, names, and secrets of some specific dragons. On her last field expedition, Rondelle lost her left leg and several adventuring companions to a blue dragon. She now has a wooden leg and has not gone dragon hunting or formed close friendships since then.

Rondelle: AL LN; AC 1; MV 6 (due to wooden leg); Bard 9; hp 26; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; S 9, D 14, C 15, I 16, W 16, Ch 16; CW 20%, DN 65%, PP 25%, RL 65%; permanent *detect lie* ability; short sword, *dagger +3,* light crossbow, *bracers of defense AC 5, ring of protection +4, ring of spell storing* (containing *haste, dimension door, fire shield,* and *stoneskin*), *cube of force,* potion of *polymorph self.*

Spells: *charm person, color spray, unseen servant; ESP, improved phantasmal force, scare; hold person, wraithform.*

Nonweapon proficiencies: animal lore,

local history, musical instrument (lyre, flute, concertina), poetry, tracking.

Rondelle is also fluent in written and spoken common, elvish, and kobold, and is the keeper of a great deal of dragon lore. (Treat this as a form of the local history nonweapon proficiency, but applied only to dragons and related species.)

Rondelle's Briefing

The PCs are escorted into a comfortable room and offered tea or brandy; Rondelle opts for the latter. Once the introductions and pleasantries are over, the bard rises from her chair and addresses the PCs:

> "I have asked you here because I have a job for you. I have been following your group's progress, and the stories I hear are impressive. Even the ones I believe make me confident that you are resourceful enough for the mission I have in mind. To call it dragon hunting . . . that is too crude a phrase, and largely inaccurate. I want you to *watch* a dragon, observe it for a few days and make notes on its behavior. I've drafted a list of the information I need, which I'll give to you in a few minutes. But first, let me tell you what I already know about this particular dragon.
>
> "I have received a number of third-hand reports from traders and vagabonds, and corroborated their claims by speaking with fugitives who came here from the town of Primsen, 50 miles away. Several people from Primsen and the surrounding hamlets have seen an enormous winged serpent. Even after accounting for the natural propensity of frightened common folk to exaggerate and embellish, I believe that this creature is unlike any that I have encountered or read about.
>
> "Although the witnesses often contradicted each other, there were some commonalities in the accounts. All sightings of the dragon were at night. A few witnesses claim that the creature had legs. Some insist that it did not. Everyone was terrified by the mere sight of the creature. Its body seemed to radiate a shimmering pale blue light—like a ghost, perhaps? Two witnesses claim to have seen the moon clearly *through* its wings, although I consider one of the witnesses entirely unreliable because she insisted that the moon 'gave birth to the flying snake,' and that the creature returns to the moon every morning.
>
> "Many people have fled the hamlet of Weedwater in favor of the security to be found in a larger community like Primsen. Many apparently do not feel safe in that city, either. These refugees invariably claim that most of their crops have been blighted—turned white, brittle, and lifeless."

If any PCs voice the suspicion that this blight could be damage from a breath weapon of cold, Rondelle shakes her head and lectures, "A white dragon in a temperate clime? Unlikely. They become lethargic in warm air and have trouble flying. Besides, a farmer would surely recognize frost damage."

Rondelle's Speculation

Once the useful facts have been presented, Rondelle asks the PCs whether they have seen any creature that matches this description, or have any speculations about the dragon's nature or origin. She listens with sincere interest to any credible theories, particularly those that agree with hers. Then she offers her own thoughts:

> "What do *I* think it is? Well, if you've ever spent any time in the company of dragons, you know that they have very strong spirits, be they sublimely noble or . . ." Rondelle trails off, apparently searching for the correct word, or perhaps lost in thought. She absentmindedly taps her fingers on her wooden leg. "The human spirit is frail by comparison, yet people plagued with fury or guilt, or thirsting for revenge, have been known to overcome death to fulfill deeds undone or haunt the living. Why wouldn't the powerful wills of these beasts ever carry them beyond their physical existence? In all my years of studying dragon lore, I have never heard of or encountered such a creature. I would speculate that the creature near Primsen is indeed a restless spirit, a dragon ghost! I do not mean to scare you. Please understand that this is all conjecture. Still, I am sure that you can see how important it is to learn as much about this creature as possible. A spectral dragon would be quite a find!"

If requested, Rondelle explains the reasoning behind this theory: The dragon appears only at night, glows like a ghost, is translucent or transparent and thus might well be noncorporeal, and appears to have sucked the life from living plants. The bard's speculation is incorrect. The dragon is a living prismatic dragon. (See pages 39-40.) Her name is Ailamere.

The Mission

Rondelle makes it clear that she is interested in hiring the party to gather information, not merely to slay this creature. She wants to know as much as possible about the dragon's activity cycle, feeding patterns, combat abilities, treasure preferences, etc. (If the mission is a complete success, the party would return with all the information contained in a standard *Monstrous Manual*™ entry.)

Rondelle hands the party a neatly printed list (see page 24) and explains, "Here is a list of information we ought to learn about this new dragon. Any unanticipated qualities or powers should, of course, be noted."

The bard does not want such a rare creature to be destroyed, if this can be avoided. However, because she recognizes that it is likely that the party will kill the dragon in self-defense, out of greed, or for some moral imperative (especially if it is undead or attacking established human communities), Rondelle also suggests some things to do with the creature's body, if it should happen to be killed.

> "According to legend," Rondelle says, "if you bury a tooth from a red dragon in fertile ground, an armed and battle-ready berserker will spring up and serve you. Some sages claim that, if a dragon's heart is removed immediately upon its death, the dragon will either attempt to possess the slayer's body or grant him three wishes. The infamous warrior Korg the Merciless once told me that a pool of blood from a freshly decapitated gold dragon can be used as a scrying device.
>
> "In one epic poem I recall, a warrior fashions a scale from a T'ien Lung—you may know it as a celestial dragon—into an arrow and fires it into the sky. The arrow transforms into a young dragon, which serves him faithfully for many years before devouring him in his sleep.

Spectral Dragon Characteristics

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE:
- Coloration
- Length
- Wingspan
- Does dragon have legs?

ACTIVITY CYCLE
- Nocturnal?
- Diurnal?
- Does dragon sleep?

DIET:
- Animal?
- Vegetable?
- Mineral?
- Energy?
- How much and how often does it eat?
- Is dragon a spirit?

LAIR
- Cave?
- Treetop?
- Burrow?
- The moon? (Ha!)

TREASURE:
- Type
- Arrangement (apparent value hierarchy)

COMMUNICATION
- Does dragon speak?
- Is it friendly? Hostile? Indifferent?
- How intelligent does it appear to be?

OBJECTIVES AND DESIRES
- Treasure?
- Power?
- What does it think of humans?

ORIGINS
- Where did the dragon come from?
- Why did it come here?
- Are there others of its kind?

COMBAT ABILITIES:
- Physical modes of attack (clawing? biting? tail strike?
- Fighting skill
- Severity of each strike
- Preferred tactics

BREATH WEAPON:
- Type
- Intensity
- Frequency
- What can be done to protect against breath weapon?

DEFENSIVE CAPABILITIES
- How difficult is it to cause damage to the dragon?
- Is magic needed to harm it?

MISCELLANEOUS:
- Is dragon undead?
- Can it drain energy?
- Can it survive in sunlight?
- Can it pass through walls?

SPELLS AND MAGICAL ABILITIES

SPECIAL VULNERABILITIES

> "I do not put much stock in tales like these, but it might nonetheless be interesting to try some experiments if you must slay the creature. I myself had the good fortune of meeting the gaze of a dragon as it perished and have, since then, been aware of every lie spoken to me."

Rondelle does not volunteer the fact that this power came from slaying a lawful-good bronze dragon.

The Reward

Few adventurers will be interested in furthering the ends of science unless their own interests are also served. Knowing this, Rondelle has devised a system of rewarding the party according to the degree of success of their research. She is willing to offer a number of gems and other items as payment, at the rate of one item per major question on her list. "Physical appearance," for instance, is a major question; to answer it completely, the PCs must learn all the related specifics, such as "coloration" and "length." If the party acquires sufficient information about the dragon's feeding habits, they get one item. If they learn the effects of its breath weapon, they earn another item. Rondelle will grant these rewards in ascending order of value, as follows:

1 question	100-gp amethyst
2 questions	500-gp pearl
3 questions	500-gp topaz
4 questions	1,000-gp sapphire
5 questions	5,000-gp jacinth
6 questions	5,000-gp star ruby
7 questions	10,000-gp diamond
8 questions	10,000-gp gem-encrusted choker
9 questions	Six blocks of *incense of meditation*
10 questions	*Boots of striding and springing*
11 questions	*Wand of negation*
12 questions	*Sun blade* (intelligent, at DM's option)
13 questions	*Robe of scintillating colors*
All questions	A significant favor or one of the items on Rondelle's person

Rondelle thinks it unlikely that more than 11 of her questions will be answered to her satisfaction, so she feels safe in offering the highly valuable items later on her list. She is willing to part with them only because these items are useless to her and invite the attention of thieves and assassins. (The items once belonged to her fallen comrades.) Her interest in keeping the dragon alive is strong enough that she will promise to give the PCs an extra item (as if they had answered one more question) as an incentive for not killing the creature.

If the adventurers attempt to persuade Rondelle to give them the magical items in advance, to help them complete the mission, she declines. "If I give you these items and you do not survive, I will have nothing to offer another group. Surely you could not have gained the excellent reputation that recommended you to my service if you cannot take care of yourselves. However, if you feel the assignment is beyond your means, I will look for another group willing to accept my offer."

Rondelle does intend to provide some additional help to the PCs, but she will not offer these items until the terms of employment are settled. The bard believes that knowledge can be as formidable a weapon as a sword, so she will arm the party with historical accounts, poetry, prose, and scientific documents that describe the behavior and combat abilities of known dragons. The DM may give the players copies of appropriate pages from the *Monstrous Manual* and selected fiction, such as chapters featuring Smaug in *The Hobbit*. Rondelle stresses that each dragon is an individual; offers that appeal to one dragon (or ploys that fool one individual) might not work on another, even one of the same subspecies.

Rondelle also gives the party a magical amulet that will aid the PCs in their research more than anything else she can offer. Her *fate's charm* allows its possessor and a number of companions to explore a course of action with little consideration of its consequences. This device makes it possible for the PCs to confront the dragon in different ways. They may try a stealthy approach, attempt diplomacy, *and* provoke the dragon into using its breath weapon to experience its effects—and live to tell about it. The *fate's charm* makes it possible to both slay the dragon and let it live.

To further discourage the permanent killing of this rare dragon, Rondelle stipulates one inflexible condition before she gives the PCs this powerful magical device: Half of any treasure retrieved during their mission must be turned over to her, and she must have the opportunity to thoroughly examine all unusual objects, including magical items, animal bones, minted coins, etc. All PCs must agree to these terms, and Rondelle verifies their good intentions with her *detect lie* ability. To ensure the adventurers' compliance, she may thinly veil a threat in words of trust: "I think that there's no need for any written contract between us, unless you desire one. Dishonesty's not in my nature, and who would betray a bard who could crush the reputation of a king or the holiest high priest by scarcely lifting a finger? No, I am content with a handshake."

Upon completion of the adventure, Rondelle will honor her agreements and pay for all satisfactory answers.

Encounters

Encounters on the 70-mile journey across lightly wooded plains from Greenglade to the area near Ailamere's lair are not likely to tax a well-equipped party's resources. Check for encounters three times per day and four times each night. Consult the chart below. A roll of 1 on the die listed in the appropriate column indicates that an encounter takes place. Roll 1d8 to determine the type of encounter; the details of each encounter are given below. If any encounter is rolled twice, re-roll or modify the second encounter as logic dictates.

Encounters

	On Road		Off Road	Ailamere's Domain	
	Day (1d6)	Night (1d10)	Day/Night (1d8)	Day (1d10)	Night (1d6)
1	Farmers	Patrol	Patrol	Wildlife	Wildlife
2	Traders	Patrol	Wildlife	Gorbo	Gorbo
3	Refugees	Wildlife	Wildlife	Gorbo	Feature
4	Patrol	Wildlife	Horse	Feature	Feature: pit
5	Wildlife	Horse	Ailamere	Feature	Ailamere
6	Horse	Goblins (6)	Goblins (6)	Ailamere	Ailamere
7	Goblins (6)	Goblins (6)	Goblin camp (12)	Goblins (6)	Ailamere
8	Goblins (6)	Goblins (12)	Goblin camp (12)	Goblins (6)	Goblins (6)

Fate's Charm

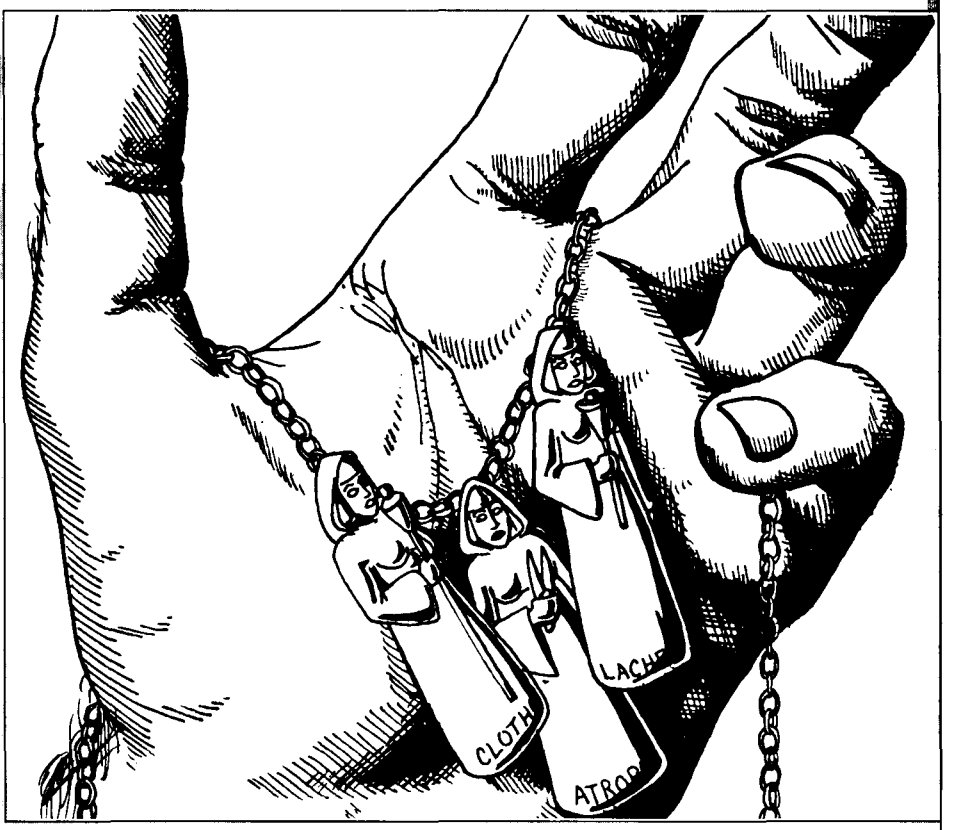
Although it appears to be no more than the sort of cheap silver trinket that a little girl might keep as a good luck charm, this magical amulet is potent indeed. At the end of a thin chain hang three tiny female figures that represent the Fates: Clotho holding a distaff, Lachesis with a spindle, Atropos carrying shears. The name of each Fate appears on the hem of her robe.

When one of these names is invoked with the proper incantation, the holder of the *fate's charm* is granted the power to explore a course of action with little risk to life and limb, for he can instantly return himself and his companions to the time and place of the initial invocation. All he need do is utter the phrase, "I do not accept this fate," any time before the power expires, and all events that took place since the invocation of the *fate's charm* simply "unhappen." Wounds disappear, but pre-existing wounds reappear if they were healed during the *fate's charm* period. Lost objects reappear; acquired objects vanish. Damaged items become whole. Magical items regain any charges expended, and spells that were cast reappear on scrolls. Anyone who has died during the *fate's charm* period is alive again.

Only the minds of the possessor of the *fate's charm* and those specifically named in the charm's incantation do not return to their previous state. Their memories of the aborted time line remain intact, and they even earn experience points from combat that "un-happens." On the negative side, spells cast from memory and PSPs expended remain lost. Some mind-affecting spells may remain in effect.

When a person has worn the *fate's charm* for a whole day, she becomes aware of its powers, the verbal incantations that activate them, and the duration of each, but is not informed of the cost of employing the powers. The incantations, durations, and costs are as follows:

"Clotho, though the way on your golden branch be dearly bought, I beseech you to guide my fate and that of these friends I name: [insert names of PCs to be included in the amulet's protection]." Duration: Two turns. Cost: 10,000 gp in nonmagical treasure currently owned or acquired in the future.



"Lachesis, spin us two threads, that if one should lead to grief, its twin may bring good fortune. Touch my fate and that of these friends I name." Duration: One turn. Cost: None.

"Atropos, a reprise! Lay down your cruel shears this hour. May this charm bring your grace upon its bearer and these friends I name." Duration: One hour. Cost: One minor magical item (*dagger +1*, spell scroll, etc.).

Those to be included under the protection of the *fate's charm* must be within 10' of the caster (who must hold or wear the charm) as the incantation is spoken, this being the only limitation on the number of people protected. At the end of the power's duration, or if the provisional time line is aborted, the figure whose power was called upon vanishes from the charm, and the price exacted for using the power instantly disappears from the belongings of the charm's possessor.

If any wizards, priests, or sages know a method for crafting a *fate's charm*, they keep the secret well. In every case that has been investigated, the ownership of one of these rare devices has been traced to an adventurer who performed a dangerous and heroic deed against all odds, for the benefit of some human community. The adventurer, usually a warrior, was approached by an old blind woman who thanked him and said, "Take this charm, and the Fates will see to your safety." The old woman then walked off and disappeared without a trace.

If a month passes during which the *fate's charm* is neither used nor given away it vanishes, never again to fall into the same person's hands.

Farmers. Ten farmers on three ox-carts are headed to nearby cities to sell their wares. They are escorted by four mounted militiamen for protection from goblins that have been sighted in the area. The farmers are from Primsen and neighboring Greenglade and have never seen the dragon or any of the damage it is supposed to have done. Most sightings, they say, have been near Weedwater, south of Primsen. The militiamen warn the adventurers about the goblins and discourage them from pursuing the dragon "for your safety, and because nobody knows what it will do to our towns if provoked."

Farmers (10): AL NG; AC 10; MV 12; F1; hp 6 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 5; clubs, knives.

Militia (4): AL LN; AC 6; MV 12; F3; hp 17 each; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 10; ring mail, shield, spear, short sword.

Traders. Three businessmen are traveling together in two horse-drawn carts, sharing the protection of three mercenary bodyguards.

Lothmo Paxtor: AL LE; AC 7; MV 9; F1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 10; XP 35; studded leather armor, sword cane, 170 sp, 45 gp. Lothmo is leaving Primsen with a load of unsold fox traps.

Xanthippe: AL LN; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 8; two daggers, 21 gp. Xanthippe is returning to a nearby city, having arranged for food deliveries to her inn.

Arvo Glib: AL NG; AC 4; MV 9; F3; hp 28; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; D 17; ML 13; studded leather armor, spear, 20 sp, 23 ep, 18 gp, 5 pp, two chests of silver jewelry (total value 1,200 gp). Arvo is transporting silver trinkets and jewelry (manufactured in Primsen) for sale in larger cities.

Spells like *ESP* and *charm person* may reveal that the mercenaries plan to subdue or kill the merchants shortly before arriving at the next town.

Mongdro and **Fiftagh:** AL NE; AC 5; MV 9; F4; hp 39, 29; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 17, I 6; ML 13; XP 270; chain mail, two-handed swords, heavy crossbows, 10 quarrels. These two dim thugs had been getting bored with pushing around weaker people and are glad that Salvador has given them some direction.

Salvador: AL CE; AC 6; MV 12; T6; hp 29; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA backstab Dmg ×3; S 10, D 18, C 9, I 16, W 7, Ch 15; ML 11; XP 1,400; long sword, short bow, jar with three applications of type D poison, three potions of *invisibility and scentlessness.* Salvador will give information about the dragon in return for money. He knows nothing about the dragon, but he is a creative liar.

Refugees. Three men, five women, and eight children lead a dozen exhausted horses and mules, overloaded with their every possession, away from Weedwater and the dragon that has ruined their lives. They are hesitant to discuss the "spirit" lest they anger or summon it, but will do so with a lot of encouragement or a little gold. They refer to the creature as a "spirit" because Weedwater's priest thought it to be an embodiment of the living spirit of the water, soil, and air that they had somehow wronged.

The refugees know all of the true information that Rondelle has already given the PCs. They add that the dragon has been seen by berry pickers on several occasions as it flew over the Deadwaters. (See map on page 29.) If the PCs ask the next obvious question, the spokesman for the refugees replies, "Yes, they pick berries in the daylight, so that's when they saw the spirit." He can also describe the damage done to their crops. (See page 28.) One woman in this group got a close view of the dragon, as she reluctantly recounts, stopping intermittently to weep:

> "Yes, I saw it. My husband, Tal, he went out to check on the horses because they were making a racket like they'd been spooked by something. I told him it might be the dragon everybody was talking about, but he said you can't live your life in fear. Maybe it was more goblins, he said, and he wasn't going to let them get away with his horses because he was hiding from a wyrm that could get us inside the house if it wanted. So he went out with his spear. I was afraid for him, so I found his sword and followed him a minute later.
>
> "It was a foggy night, so I didn't see anything until I almost bumped into him. He was stumbling toward me, real slow, and trying to talk. His face and hands were peeling, and he looked like a week-dead corpse. He collapsed at my feet. The horses were kicking their stalls, and I could hardly see anything. Suddenly two eyes appeared in the mist, right in front of my face! They stared at me, coming closer and closer until my back was against the house. I didn't even know I'd been walking backward! The creature bent over Tal and put its hands together, like it was praying. There was a bright flash of light and I could see the spirit. It looked like a giant snake, big as the house! It was so bright, and the colors, all moving around, they made me dizzy. When I woke up it was dark and cold. The spirit was gone. Tal was gone. And so was the sword I'd had in my hands."

Refugees (16): AL any; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level humans; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (hand tools and daggers only); ML 4.

Patrol. These mounted rangers based in Primsen are performing their regular patrol of the area, looking for signs of goblin activity. In recent days, unusually high numbers of goblin sightings have been reported, but no one has been attacked by the creatures. Local authorities blame the dragon for the disappearance of three people in the Weedwater area, but the rangers suspect that these people were abducted by goblins.

Last night, the rangers attacked a party of six goblins that they found camping in the woods. The goblins were no match for the rangers and were easily destroyed. The last goblin screeched its death curse in a gloating tone. Two of the rangers know a smattering of the goblin tongue, and both believe that the repugnant little creature was promising revenge.

If a second encounter with a patrol is rolled, it is with Samset Redwing, an intelligent but impulsive lone ranger. She is quite familiar with this region and will gladly serve as a guide for the PCs if she believes their intentions are good. Her orders from the Greenglade militia captain are to protect the hamlets and monitor the goblins, but she has never had much faith in the wisdom of bureaucracies or their ability to adapt to unusual situations, like the appearance of a dragon. Samset has no interest in going to Kilarken (a mining town that the PCs may want to visit, see page 29

for details). If the party wants to go there, she offers to meet them in Weedwater at an appointed time.

Rangers (3): AL LG; AC 7; MV 12; R3; hp 15, 12, 7; THAC0 18; #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type; ML 14; studded leather armor, long sword, hand ax, long bow, 20 arrows.

Samset Redwing: AL CG; AC 0 (−2 running with magic boots); MV 12; R8; hp 60; THAC0 13; #AT 5/2 (short sword and dagger); Dmg by weapon type; S 18/51 (+2/+3), D 18; HS 59%, MS 72%; ML 16; *bracers of defense AC 4, short sword +2, dagger +1,* long bow, 20 flight arrows, *boots of speed.* Nonweapon proficiencies: animal lore, blind fighting, tracking, tumbling, elvish, goblin. Spell: *locate animals or plants.*

Wildlife. Normal wildlife is common outside of Ailamere's domain. In these areas, the PCs encounter one or more large or exceptional creatures that prefer to avoid contact: an elk, a bear, a giant owl, or a pair of blink dogs. Within the lands claimed by the dragon, most large animals have been eaten or scared away; small, innocuous creatures remain in hiding. In this area, the PCs encounter a squirrel, starling, nonvenomous snake, rabbit, or orphaned fawn.

Horse. This domesticated horse was frightened by the dragon. Any information gained from the horse is tainted by its panic and general stupidity. The animal is dragging a plow as it wanders through the wilderness. Thinking PCs will conclude that it must have been spooked during the daytime.

Draft horse: INT animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 12; HD 3; hp 13; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SZ L; ML 6; MM/194.

Goblins or goblin camp. No goblin scouting party is likely to be a significant threat to high-level PCs or any sizable community. These encounters are important for the information they provide: The goblins are currently assembling an army of over 400 armed goblins to attack and plunder the nearest human settlements. Past goblin raids have been a nuisance, but the impending invasion could inflict tremendous damage on Weedwater, Kilarken, and even Primsen. Although the scouts don't know exactly when or how the attack will take place, it is clear that the towns will have little time to prepare an adequate defense or muster reinforcements from other cities.

The best defense against the goblins is what may seem to be the greater threat: Ailamere herself. The goblin army will not attack if its scouts report that a dragon prowls the area; no goblins have survived an encounter with the dragon. Even if the goblins do come in force, Ailamere can defeat them (but not if she is slain!).

Goblin scouts (6): INT average; AL LE; AC 6; MV 6; HD 1−1; hp 4 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SZ S (4′ tall); ML 10; XP 15; MM/163; mace, spear, 1-8 sp, 2-12 cp each.

The goblins may be replaced by gnolls, hobgoblins, norkers, orcs, or any hostile humanoids other than grimlocks, which are immune to the prismatic dragon's sight-dependent powers.

Ailamere. Use the "First Contact" table (page 33) to determine the circumstances of the PCs' first encounter with the dragon. Ailamere is described in detail beginning on page 32.

Gorbo. See page 30 for a description of this half-dwarf outcast.

Feature. This roll indicates some exceptional feature of the landscape that could help the party observe the dragon's behavior or could give clues to its nature and characteristics. The DM may invent a feature, choose from the list below, or determine the feature randomly by rolling 1d10.

1. Lookout. This natural stone tower, bluff, or exceptionally tall tree offers an excellent view of the surrounding region, including the Deadwaters lake where Ailamere lives (although not her cave itself). Such a vista is favored by the dragon, too. The PCs have a 50% chance to find dragon tracks or a few scales in the area. Waiting here is a good way to attract the dragon's attention (see "Senses," page 32).

2. Cave. Deep and narrow enough to provide good concealment, this cave offers protection from the scouting dragon. A guide who knows this region can point out several caves, including 1-4 within a mile of the dragon's cave (in addition to those described in "The Lair").

3. Clearing. Ailamere removed the trees and boulders from this area and swept them into low barricades for concealment and defense. There is a 75% chance of finding claw marks, droppings, or other signs of the dragon's presence here. If the party encounters Ailamere while lingering here (see the "First Contact" table, page 33), she lands at this very spot and is not merely seen in the distance.

4. Pit (in woods) or **rock slide** (in rocky areas). A quarter of these traps have been triggered. Ailamere knows where all her traps are and often guides large prey into them. Some pits are also refuse dumps for animal bones. Pits are typically 20′ in diameter and cause 2-12 hp damage to those who fall in (Dexterity ability check at −3 penalty to avoid falling). Rock slides are often set in dead-end canyons and cause 5-50 hp damage (save vs. breath weapon for half damage).

5. Dead plants. When the dragon breathed on these cultivated crops (in civilized areas) or trees (in the wilderness), they were killed instantly but preserved as an odd, whitish patch among otherwise healthy vegetation. The plants' leaves are brittle and whitish-green. Tree bark is peeling off, and the water-carrying interior (phloem) is bursting with tiny crystals that resemble a warm, dry form of ice. Roots are similarly damaged to a depth of 2″. The affected patch is 30′ wide and 100′ long. No plants higher than 10′ above ground have been affected.

6. Footprints. Preserved in the soft earth, these prints clearly show the marks of talonlike feet. The front prints are 5′ long and 3′ wide, with three webbed toes and a humanlike thumb. The rear prints are a foot shorter but equally wide, not webbed, and have a rear talon but no thumb. Rondelle or anyone with animal lore proficiency (or common sense) can deduce that the dragon is well adapted for swimming and for snatching prey, and that it is corporeal.

Rondelle would pay well for casts of the footprints. If the PCs do not carry plaster (and most don't), they can fill the footprints with water and coax the dragon into breathing her water-solidifying gas—and carefully avoiding the deadly gas themselves.

7. Scales. Two or three scales lie on the ground, are embedded in the bark of a tree, or sparkle at the bottom of a stream. (If you have a holographic picture you don't value much, cut it into several rounded triangles. That's what the scales look like.)

8. Dropped item. This may be the wagon that carried Kilarken's silver (see "Kilarken") or the broken body of Tal (see "Refugees"). Ailamere dropped the item as she flew home.

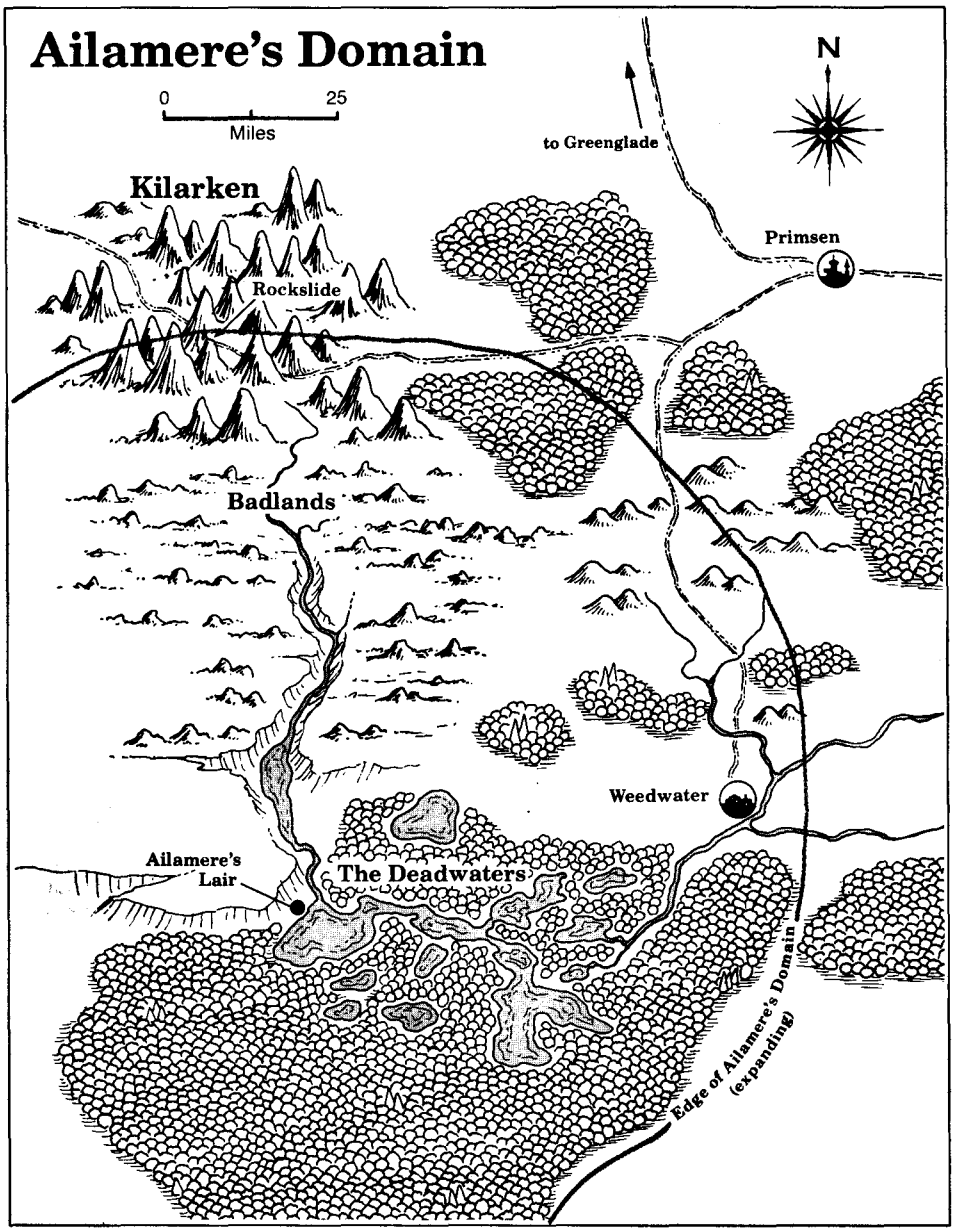
9. Markings. Five oddly spaced chevrons scar the earth, a cliff face, or a tree, declaring in the written language of prismatic dragons that this land belongs to Ailamere. If one of the PCs paints this symbol on his shield, Ailamere will be so pleased with the mortal's respectful attitude that she will not demand any tribute from him or his companions. However, if the symbol is drawn vertically or backward, the dragon will be gravely insulted. The correct orientation matches the stripes on Ailamere's face, seen from her right. A *comprehend languages* spell (but not a rogue's ability) can determine the symbol's meaning and proper orientation.

10. Goblin remains. When the dragon eats prey, it leaves no remains. However, she hates goblins, so she attacks to maim and kill them with her claws and breath weapon. The party comes across the mutilated remains of several goblins. It is unclear how many there were, due to the grisly damage. Among the bodies, the PCs can find 30 cp and one excellent scabbard, but no sword.

Primsen

This town of over 3,000 people has expanded its economy from farming to include substantial trade and special services. Primsen has an exceptional 60% literacy rate and even supports a handful of writers, artists, and wizards. When questioned about the dragon sightings, the townspeople are rarely hysterical, and often skeptical. The most cynical townsfolk suspect that the tale of a crop-killing dragon is merely an invention by Weedwater farmers seeking deferrals on loans they cannot pay.

It is not difficult to locate refugees from Weedwater whose crops or homes were destroyed. Many have turned to panhandling or worse to make a living. Of these unfortunates, 25% would do almost anything for gold, including serving as a guide for adventurers. Most of them know that the dragon comes from west of Weedwater; 60% know the general topography of the area and that there are many caves near the lakes known as the Deadwaters; 30% are familiar enough with the area to be somewhat useful as guides; 10% falsely claim to know the precise location of the dragon's lair, and offer their services for no less than 100 gp. A party that naively flaunts its wealth and intentions is automatically approached by a false guide, who takes the money and runs at the first opportunity.



Con artist: AL CN; AC 8; MV 12; T2; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA backstab Dmg ×2; S 10, D 16, C 12, I 15, W 7, Ch 12; PP 50%, OL 15%, FT 5%, MS 35%, HS 55%, DN 15%, CW 70%; knife, proficient with short sword and club.

While many refugees have come to Primsen from Weedwater, there has been no contact with the village of Kilarken in over three weeks, since a man was brought here for medical attention after falling down a mine shaft. Infrequent traffic from the mines is not unusual and does not worry most Primsenites. Suspicious (or confused) adventurers may investigate this slim lead.

Kilarken

One hundred dwarves and 80 stout humans make up the severe and humorless but hospitable population of Kilarken,

located in a severe, humorless, and inhospitable mountain valley. Their livelihood comes from seemingly inexhaustible silver mines. Most miners live underground or in cliff dwellings for protection from monsters and inclement weather. Grain and other foodstuffs are imported from Primsen, but the miners' diet is supplemented by foraging and hunting.

The last group to leave Kilarken for Primsen was not the one that transported the injured human (Pequot the Klutz) three weeks ago, but rather a party of eight dwarves and four mules with a wagon load of silver, six days ago.

As the PCs approach Kilarken, they find the road blocked by a rock slide two miles from the mines. People and mules can climb over the rocks, but horses and vehicles cannot. If the PCs report this obstruction to the authorities in Kilarken, they discover that the miners already know about the problem but have not begun to clear it, preferring to wait for men from Primsen to contribute labor to this undertaking. They expect help to arrive soon, sent on by the dwarves transporting the silver (who must have gotten through before the rock slide, or they would have turned back). In fact, the miners at first thought that the PCs had been sent to help them in this task.

If any PC mentions that the dwarves and their silver never arrived in Primsen, a party of Kilarken's strongest laborers is immediately dispatched to search the rubble. They had never thought to do this because it is inconceivable that the dwarves would not have sensed the incipient rock slide long before it became a danger.

The dwarves and mules are indeed buried beneath the rocks that block the road, but the silver and the wagon are gone.

As the dwarves headed toward Primsen, Ailamere stopped the caravan and demanded tribute for passing through her territory: all the silver they carried. The dwarves wisely obliged, but as the dragon grabbed the wagon in her claws and was about to take off, one of the miners whispered, "Watch where the wyrm goes, boys. We'll get our silver back yet." Ailamere, who has excellent hearing, returned to bury the insolent mortal and his companions under a rock slide she had prepared earlier, to use in case they did not comply with her demand.

Much of what transpired can be learned through divination spells and examination of the site. The marks of giant claws undermining the stone on the ledge above are unmistakable. When the people of Kilarken find out about this vindictive act, they clamor for the dragon's death, although they have little to offer as a reward. Their one skilled leather worker is willing to fashion armor out of the dragon's hide. The party's wizards are offered a lifetime supply of quartz crystals, which are regularly unearthed and discarded here. In the past, the miners have done a small but steady trade in these crystals, to wizards who use them in arcane research and practices.

Weedwater

This hamlet of 250 is located within the territory claimed by Ailamere. Here, a web of tiny creeks and streams supports beautiful groves of trees and ferns, lush blankets of clover studded with brilliant wildflowers, and productive cultivated fields and orchards.

Many of the crops in these fields have been destroyed in a manner that no PC has ever seen before. From the rigid and pale appearance of these damaged plants, it would not be unreasonable to suspect that the life had been drawn out of them, and in a way this is so. The water in all the destroyed plants has been transmuted into solid form (not ice). The plants have assumed a whitish cast throughout and are very brittle; stems and stalks shatter like glass rods, and fruits become as hard as baseballs. The damage always occurs in a path 30' wide and 100' long, though intersecting paths can make the pattern less obvious.

Weedwater is now a ghost town of empty cabins, stables, and granaries. The town's one active inhabitant is Gorbo "the Mule," a half-dwarf outcast from Kilarken, who is present 75% of the time, enjoying the comforts denied him in his life of exile.

Gorbo "The Mule" (half-dwarf): AL NE; AC 11; MV 6; Psi6; hp 30; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD +1 to saving throw vs. enchantment/charm; S 9, D 6, C 18, I 14, W 15, Ch 4; SZ S; ML 8; XP 650; spear, knife, backpack, water skin, camouflaged one-man tent.

Psionic powers: 73 PSPs; Psychokinesis (primary discipline): Create Object *[major creation]*, Telekinesis, Animate Object, Control Body *[domination]*, Control Flames, *[pyrotechnics]*, Control Sound *[audible glamer]*, Control Wind *[gust of wind]*, Inertial Barrier *[shield]*, Levitation.

Psychometabolism: Immovability *[wraithform]*.

Psychoportation: Teleport, Dimensional Door *[passwall]*, Time Shift [no spell], Time/Space Anchor [no spell].

If *The Complete Psionics Handbook* is not available, the DM can use the descriptions of appropriate wizard spells (of the same name or the one in brackets). When Gorbo uses these spells, they require no material, verbal, or somatic components, work only on a roll of 15 or lower on 1d20 (and backfire on a 20), and can be used repeatedly and for any duration that Gorbo chooses, but only until his PSPs (Psionic Strength Points) run out. If this expedient is used, psionic sciences (Create Object, Telekinesis, Teleport) consume 15 PSPs per round of use. Psionic devotions (all others) cost 8 PSPs per round.

Everyone knows that humans and dwarves cannot produce children together, and very rarely try. Gorbo, is, however, the product of such a union, one that both parents deeply regret. He is rude, crude, and obnoxious. His worse qualities are selfishness and cruelty. As if a reflection of his malevolent spirit, his body is ugly and misshapen. He has a hunched back and twisted knobs for fingers. Stiff hairs grow in random patches all over his repugnant body. His skin is wrinkled and sagging, although he is only 16 years old.

The community of Kilarken tolerated his mischievous use of his strange mental powers until, at the age of 14, he was banished for causing a man to fall to his death. (Gorbo animated a tall ladder while the man stood upon it to repair a roof.) He has spent the last two years menacingly haunting the fringes of Kilarken and Weedwater, but never actually harming anybody.

Gorbo has seen the dragon enter its cave in the Deadwaters and will guide the party there for the price of a "token" from each adventurer—perhaps one person's sword, another's ring, money from another, and a kiss from a female PC. He is extremely unreasonable in negotiations and is utterly indifferent to threats and coercion; such measures only make him more vocally abusive. Gorbo's speech is extremely hostile and offensive (not to mention his spitting), but he does not want to fight anyone. The only ways to get him to serve as a guide are to *charm* him or to

comply with his demands. The only question he will answer without payment is, "Where are the people who live here?" He answers gleefully, showing pointed, rotting teeth in a twisted smile. "Ain't nobody *living* here but us mules. But I'll tell you because I like you, Ugly. They're down by the river."

Over the last several months, Ailamere has been toying with the people of Weedwater: destroying random fields, stealing or scaring away animals, and snatching up the occasional farmer or destroying his house. In response to the creature's terrorism, Weedwater's priest (actually a druid), Thernan of the Dale, marched around the periphery of the town for two days and nights, calling out to the dragon ("the wrathful spirit of the land") that a sacrifice would be made for it.

Ailamere heard his call and viewed it as an opportunity to conduct some research of her own. She swam up the river to the place appointed for the sacrifice, where all of Weedwater had gathered around a pyre of a substantial portion of their remaining crops.

Assuming that the people themselves were the sacrifice (for in her mind, she deserves nothing less), Ailamere used her *waveform* power to drench the congregation, then rose out of the water and breathed on them, "freezing" them in place by solidifying the water that covered them. (See the prismatic dragon description on page 39.) Most of those who were not caught in the initial burst of gas were mesmerized by its shimmering, swirling colors. They walked into the cloud as it rolled by, and became immobilized and died as they entered it. The few who managed to flee were immediately hunted down by the dragon. Evidence of their fate, made especially grim by its scarcity, can be found nearby: a bloody swath of clothing, a single sandal, an abandoned scythe, footprints that suddenly end.

The remains of the sacrificial congregation can be found near the wide, slow-moving river that runs through Weedwater. Their bodies, encrusted in luminescent shells of transmuted water, resemble weatherworn marble statues. Close inspection reveals small patches of peeling skin exposed where the shells have evaporated (usually on palms and cheeks) or cracked (on the joints of the few villagers who have toppled over).

This is a most eerie scene, especially when two of the statues open their eyes! Only two villagers were hardy enough to survive the internal damage caused by the dragon's breath: the druid Thernan of the Dale and a laborer named John Tillman. As their nostrils were never entirely filled with water, they were not asphyxiated when the water solidified. These two can still breathe, though only in the shallow breaths that their inflexible shells permit. Because their bodies have remained warm, much of the transmuted water has evaporated from their exposed skin.

Thernan of the Dale: AL N; AC 8; MV 12; D6; hp 29 (currently 10); THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 9, D 16, C 15, I 15, W 16, Ch 15; SD +2 on saves vs. fire and electricity, pass freely through overgrown areas; ML 12; *staff of command,* pouches containing mistletoe and other spell components.

Spells: *animal friendship, bless, cure light wounds, locate animals or plants, pass without trace; augury, charm mammal, dust devil, goodberry, speak with animals; hold animal, plant growth.*

Thernan is too weak to break his shell, and cannot even speak or turn his head because of his hardened thick beard and hooded cloak.

Inspired by a vision, Thernan came to Weedwater to teach its people how to serve as benevolent stewards of the land. He does not know what course of action to take with respect to the dragon. It's hard to balance the priorities of his work in Weedwater with the well-being of the dragon, while protecting local ecosystems from the dragon's excesses and the ravages of goblins. Despite his firm druidic beliefs, Thernan is probably the most reasonable and flexible of the major NPCs in this adventure.

John Tillman: AL CG; AC 10; MV 12; F2; hp 12 (currently 3); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (currently unarmed); S 18, D 9, C 15, I 9, W 7, Ch 11; ML 14.

As a hired hand in Weedwater, and occasionally Primsen, John Tillman has always had to struggle to provide for his wife and four children. Like everyone else in Weedwater, the Tillman family had faith that Thernan's ceremony would quell the angry spirit that had been disrupting their lives. When the dragon emerged from the river and killed Tillman's family and virtually everyone he knew, that faith ended. Encrusted in a shell of solidified water, he never tried to free himself, for he thought that he was dead. He believes that his current state—aching, hungry, unable to look away from his dead family and friends—is his eternal punishment for some unknown sin, and it will take some time before he can accept the truth and continue his life.

When he does recover, John's one goal will be to see the dragon dead. He will retrieve his long sword from his home and insist on accompanying the party as they seek out the creature. If the PCs clearly do not want the dragon to be slain, John pretends to agree with their ideas, although his poor acting may not conceal his thirst for vengeance. While he might interfere with the party's plans by attacking the beast at a key moment in negotiations, he can be helpful if the PCs decide to destroy the dragon, even if this demands self-sacrifice (although he will still panic in a dragon's awesome presence).

Each day, 0-5 (1d6 – 1) Weedwater farmers return from Primsen, where they had gone on business. A total of 25 farmers will return to Weedwater; 80 others fled the town before the sacrifice, never planning to return. When word spreads that the dragon has been slain, run off, or neutralized, most of these refugees come back and attempt to resume their lives.

The Deadwaters

The region known as the Deadwaters gets its name from a network of small, dark lakes and the slow, chilly streams that connect them. Most of these lakes are surrounded by dead trees and seemingly impenetrable hedges of vicious thorny vines. While the name appears to be quite apt, at first, not everything here is dead. The local people come to this uninviting area to gather the plump, sweet berries called pixiehearts that grow only in the wild. They also harvest many medicinal herbs and fish for catfish. Fishermen, however, are advised not to go into the water or hold too tightly to their lines, because these lakes are also home to perpetually ravenous giant gar.

The Lair

The cave that serves as the entrance to Ailamere's lair is on a mile-wide lake bordered on the west by abrupt sandstone cliffs. The dark, twisted, foreboding

The Dragon Ailamere

Ailamere's body is narrower than those of most dragons. When she draws her wings and legs against her body to dive down on prey or into water, she resembles a huge serpent. Her scales are bluish silver overlaid with shimmering patterns that make the scales appear to change color depending on the orientation of the viewer and the light source. The skin over her wing bones and her ridge of low dorsal fins ranges from rich green to deep indigo, and the scales near her mouth form distinct chevron stripes of orange and red.

Only another dragon can tell at a glance that Ailamere is female. Therefore, although female pronouns are used in this adventure, the DM should use neutral pronouns until Ailamere's sex is disclosed. If the players consistently use male pronouns to refer to the dragon, the DM should use these also.

Ailamere (mature adult prismatic dragon): INT high; AL CN; AC −2; MV 9, fly 30 (C), swim 12; HD 14; hp 69; THAC0 7; #AT 3 plus possible kick, slap, wing, and snatch; Dmg 1d6+7/1d6+7/1d20+9; SA breath weapon, *color spray* at 7th level of ability (9th level in low light and using glowstone) once per day, *waveform* three times per day, *hypnotic pattern* twice per day; MR 25%; SZ H (120′ long); ML 16; XP 18,000.

Spells: *audible glamer, detect magic, unseen servant; Maximillian's earthen grasp; spectral force.* Ailamere calls the *earthen grasp* spell her "earthen dragon claw," but the effect is identical (see *Tome of Magic*).

Ailamere carries a glowstone (a glass gem with *continual light* cast on it) in a pouch strapped to her wrist; a *rod of security* is lashed to her opposite forearm.

For complete information on prismatic dragons, see page 39.

Senses

In addition to excellent senses of sight, smell, and hearing, many dragons also sense minute variations in temperature (like many snakes), electromagnetic fields (like sharks), and even the presence of sentient life (like some undead). Ailamere's *detect invisibility* ability has a limit of 70′. Still, her powers of observation are exceptional, so she has a good chance of detecting a party traveling through her territory (see "First Contact") and a fair chance of noticing the signs intruders leave behind. Each day that the PCs spend in the dragon's territory, Ailamere has a base 20% chance of noticing some sign of their presence. This chance is doubled if they use horses or mules, or if they light campfires. The chance is doubled again every day spent within a mile of the lair and with each act of foolish carelessness (such as leaving a campfire unburied). Extra precautions can cumulatively halve the probability of being detected (for example: using a *pass without trace* spell, camping in a deep cave, or sleeping in a *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion*).

Communication

Ailamere can communicate with any intelligent creature. Though she speaks most human languages poorly, her ability to understand and converse in another language is augmented by limited telepathy. Using this combination of telepathy and speech, Ailamere has virtually mastered dwarvish and the language of the locathah, which live near the island where she was born. After talking for twenty minutes or so, her halting attempts at speaking the common tongue will sound perfectly fluent. Despite her previous experience with kobolds and goblins, she never learned to speak with them, assuming them to be unintelligent pests.

The dragon also has the following nonweapon proficiencies: astrology, engineering, tracking, and weather sense. If checks are required, assume her incredible experience and sharp senses give her base 18 ability scores for all these skills.

Ailamere's Background

Ailamere was banished from the island homeland of prismatic dragons, a species that eschews violence between its members, because she scratched out the eye of a cousin who defeated her in a competition of light displays. In the 10 years of her exile, she accumulated a substantial hoard of treasure, only to have much of it plundered from her previous lair by kobolds.

These little creatures came to infest every tiny cave and crag of the mountain where she laired. They frequently pilfered her treasure in small groups and took refuge in tunnels that sloped upward, where her heavy breath-gas could not climb. She killed many kobolds, but they were innumerable, and their burrows were too deep for her to breathe into or excavate. Moreover, whenever she tried to rout some, others would raid her unguarded treasure.

The dragon is humiliated that she was driven from her old lair by such vermin, and her hatred for them runs deep. She discovered her current lair by accident, while chasing a giant gar underwater.

Motives and Attitudes

Ailamere would like to return to her species' homeland, and believes that she would be welcomed if she returned with offspring. Therefore, she wants to find a mate. This matter is rather urgent, as she knows that her short period of opportunity for conceiving young will come within the next year. (See "Ecology," page 40.) Clever adventurers may gain Ailamere's favor by fabricating a tale of having met an appropriate mate for her, but woe to the mortal who inadvertently refers to Ailamere as male in her presence!

Like all prismatic dragons, Ailamere is obsessed with the accumulation of treasure. However, objects that she prizes are not necessarily those that humans value. She values silver more as food than as treasure to be hoarded. Prismatic dragons very rarely collect copper, not because it is worthless but because it is sacred. If offered copper, Ailamere demands that the full amount proffered be thrown into the lake in front of her cave. She will not talk with creatures so disrespectful as to hoard precious copper, the "mother metal."

Another treasure of particular interest to Ailamere is art. Dragon aesthetics differs from that of humans; the most beautiful objects (in Ailamere's eyes) conform to one or more of the following criteria: simplicity, symmetry, astrological significance, resemblance to her species. Swords are considered beautiful to see and rewarding to possess. Although she understands that a sword could be used as a

weapon, Ailamere believes that a sword's foremost purpose is as a dragon effigy—a simplified representation of a dragon in flight. Thus, a thick-skulled fighter who raises his weapon in a threat (as John Tillman will do if present and not restrained) might gain Ailamere's favor for his gesture of respectful submission. She would never allow herself to be struck, however.

Ailamere is interested in expanding her domain. She has little competition, so the area under her control has grown considerably since she settled into her lakeside cave. Her desire for more territory will soon result in a conflict with the mining town of Kilarken. To Ailamere, animals and people in her territory are trespassers whom she has the right to demand tribute from or dispose of as she pleases.

Activity Cycle

Prismatic dragons usually hunt during the daytime because light is required for most of their special powers to be effective. However, Ailamere prefers to hunt at night because she possesses a glowstone that allows her to employ her *color spray* ability more skillfully. She does occasionally hunt during the day, however. The table below reflects her usual behavior but makes it possible for her to spend days in her cave or away from her lair. (Note that even where there is no number in the "No Change" column, you may still roll the previous activity.)

Until the dragon's lair is reached, random encounters determine Ailamere's behavior toward the PCs. After the adventurers reach the lair, roll 1d20 and consult this table to determine what Ailamere is doing at any given time. The results are subject to modification by PC action and DM whim.

Immediately before entering or after exiting her lair, Ailamere often (70% of the time) stands atop the cliff overlooking the lake and surveys her territory. There, she considers the locale of her next hunt or revels in the silence of her domain—silence caused by the terror she strikes into the mortal creatures of the earth. While atop the cliff, she has a base 125% chance of spotting anyone wading in the lake, with the following cumulative modifiers:

- −10% hiding behind a tree
- −10% magically silent
- −15% bathed in lake water or magically scentless
- −30% mostly submerged
- −35% gaseous or ectoplasmic
- −75% invisible
- +20% whispering
- +70% talking (including verbal spells)

Atop this perch, Ailamere occasionally (40% chance) expresses her arrogant joy with a deep, awesome bellow that sends ripples across the water and terror through most creatures. All those hearing this cry (audible up to one mile, under normal conditions) must save vs. petrification as if they were within the radius of the dragon's fear aura. Those who fail their save by four or more points flee as quickly as possible for 2-12 rounds. The noise of a person fleeing through water is immediately detected by the dragon; the sound of someone running on dry land has a 60%-99% chance of being detected by the dragon's sharp senses, depending on proximity (20%-33% chance for elves and halflings).

First Contact

Roll 1d10 and consult the table below to determine how and where the party first encounters Ailamere if she is rolled as a random encounter. (See page 25.) Add all modifiers that apply:

Party magically silent or scentless: −1
Fewer than four visible PCs: −2
Ranger in party: −2
Party invisible: −3
Each PC in metal armor: +1
Party careless: +3
(They sing while they march, travel in open spaces instead of under the cover of valleys or trees, pitch tents on a hill, linger at a lookout point or on ridges, etc.)
Party has horses or mules: +4
Party uses fire: +5

0 or below: Ailamere surprised and vulnerable. (Examples: She is digging a pit or poised on a promontory and observing a distant animal.) Range: 100 yards.

1: Ailamere seen in the distance, descending on goblins (1-4) or an elk (5-6) for the kill. Range: ½ mile.

2: Ailamere seen flying toward (during day) or away from (at night) her lair. Range: 2 miles.

3: Ailamere seen flying near PCs' position. (She doesn't see them yet.) Range: 1 mile at sighting.

4: Ailamere is on the ground, following the PCs' trail (like a bloodhound). Range ¼ mile and closing fast. If the PCs hide immediately, a standard surprise roll is made for the dragon when she catches up, modified as the DM deems appropriate. Mounted PCs can outride her (her Movement Rate is 9), but she takes to the air as soon as she hears the cantering or galloping of horses.

5: Ailamere encountered on the ground. No surprise. Range: 20 yards.

6: Ailamere, flying nearby, clearly notices the party and approaches. No surprise. Range: ¼ mile.

7: Ailamere, on the PCs' path, hears or smells them and addresses them as they come into sight. PCs surprised. No terrain advantage. Range: 10 yards.

Where's Ailamere?

Time	Out of Lair Hunting	Out of Lair Nearby	In Lair Awake	In Lair Asleep	No Change
Midnight-3 A.M.	1-12	13	14-15	16	17-20
3 A.M.-5 A.M.	1-14	15	16	17-18	19-20
5 A.M.-6 A.M.	1-5	6-11	12-15	16-20	—
6 A.M.-9 A.M.	—	1-6	7-16	17-18	19-20
9 A.M.-Noon	—	1-3	4-7	8-13	14-20
Noon-4 P.M.	—	1	2-3	4-13	14-20
4 P.M.-6 P.M.	1-2	3-6	7-12	13-18	19-20
6 P.M.-7 P.M.	1-4	5-14	15-19	20	—
7 P.M.-10 P.M.	1-12	13-14	15	16	17-20
10 P.M.-Midnight	1-12	13	14	15	16-20

8: Ailamere addresses party from a position of advantage (PCs in a narrow chasm, climbing a cliff, wading through a stream, etc.). She reacts to any overheard threat to her person ("How are we going to kill the dragon, guys?") by attempting to snatch an adventurer or breathe on them all (with surprise). However, she does not know the common tongue well enough to understand euphemisms. ("I don't care if that bard doesn't want the lizard diced, I bet it's got a heck of a stash!")

9: Ailamere emerges from a deep river or lake and splashes water on the party before she speaks to them. Party is surprised on a roll of 1-6 on 1d10 (+2 to surprise roll if a ranger is present). Save vs. breath weapon to avoid the water, at −8 if surprised.

10+: Ailamere addresses party when they are vulnerable to one of her traps (a covered, concealed pit in woods; a prepared rock slide in valley). If the heroes have talked about dragon slaying, she attacks first.

Observing Ailamere

If the adventurers spot Ailamere without being seen themselves, they can observe her natural behavior. The best way to do this is to pursue her airborne and invisibly, but the resources necessary for such reconnaissance may not be available to the party. Scrying, or *polymorphing* into the form of an innocuous creature could be effective as well, and resourceful players can surely devise other strategies.

Some PCs may find it easiest to find the dragon by letting her find them. This is not the best method, because the discovery of intruders in her territory alters Ailamere's normal behavior. She becomes extremely cautious and will never allow humans to approach her lair when she is not nearby to protect her treasure. (However, PCs who have agreed to camp at least 10 miles from the dragon's cave—subject to frequent monitoring by Ailamere—can still explore the lair if Gorbo is around to *teleport* them).

One way to get Ailamere to permit observation of her hunting techniques (a large clue to her combat abilities) is to be honest, if a bit grandiose: "We're here to spread word of your glorious exploits across the world!" If the PCs adopt this approach, Ailamere demands compensation for her valuable time, and for the inconvenience and distastefulness of associating with inferior, ugly creatures. Such flattery, however, induces the dragon to show off her varied capabilities more quickly than they could be gleaned from observing her normal behavior. She will not, however, exhaust her breath attacks on animals and goblins, saving at least one breath for defense against the party. Ailamere is so self-absorbed and dracocentric that her questions about human capabilities are few and far between. She will be very interested (and incredulous) if she sees the PCs employ magic.

Use the table on page 33 to determine the dragon's behavior while the PCs observe her. While "In Lair, Awake," she spends 25% of her time in the dark and the remainder of these periods in the light of her glowstone, either gazing at her own reflection in her mirrored treasure chest lid, or lying on her back, using her scales to project complex color patterns on the cave roof.

While "Out of Lair, Nearby," she scouts for intruders, checks her traps, and occasionally (10% of the time) digs or sets a new trap. When Ailamere is "Out of Lair, Hunting," use the encounter table on page 25 to determine what she is hunting. If she hunts for several consecutive periods, she must travel quite far, so the *Monstrous Compendium*® tables are more appropriate for determining her prey.

Whether or not Ailamere knows she is being observed, the dragon always attacks goblins on sight, swiftly and mercilessly.

Reactions

Having had very little experience with humans, Ailamere believes they are all as vulnerable as the ones she killed in Weedwater. She thinks that no human could withstand her deadly breath attack or a blow from one of her mighty claws. However, she doesn't know the offensive capabilities of humans, so she remains wary. She does not know that some humans can cast spells.

Ailamere is hostile to adventurers in her domain, but she sees no urgency in destroying them. She listens to what the PCs have to say if she is shown appropriate respect. Gestures of respect include offering tribute of a magical weapon, gold crown, large mirror, bag of quartz, or poem about the dragon's beauty. If she must demand tribute (it is not offered within two minutes of the initial encounter), no fewer than two such tokens will be acceptable. Adventurers who flatly refuse to donate to Ailamere's hoard or make excuses for not offering gifts are attacked as punishment for their insolence. If the party responds to her threats with even bigger threats, Ailamere is taken aback and might even choose to listen to such spirited mortals, for her amusement and to satisfy her curiosity.

Dragon's Death

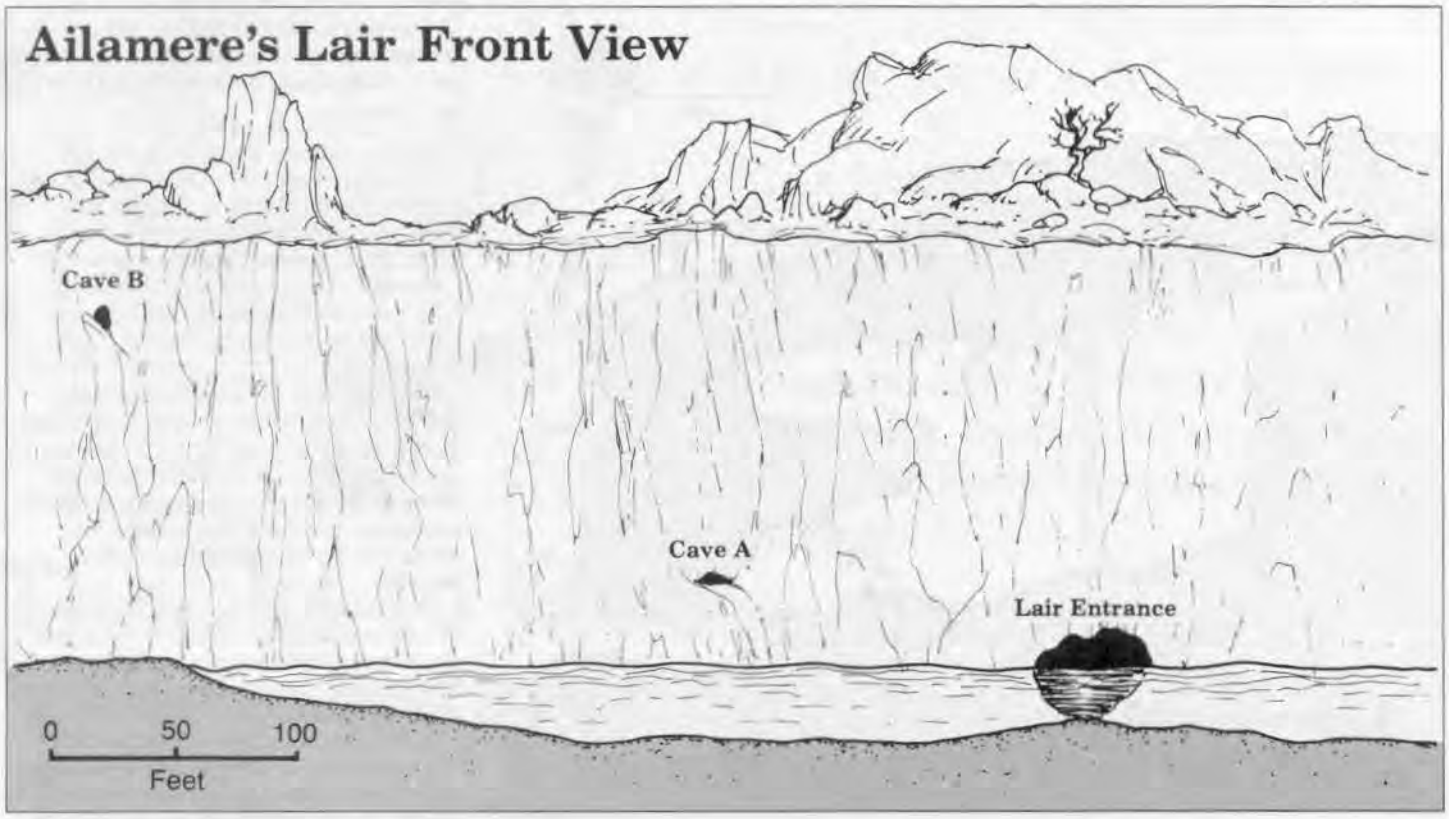
Some PCs may try to slay Ailamere to learn whether they can gain any unusual powers, as noted in Rondelle's folklore. In fact, the dragon's fleeting mystical energy may have several unusual manifestations, but discovering any of them takes imagination, initiative, and a lot of luck.

If a piece of the dragon's skin is fashioned into a mask, it gives the first person to wear it divine beauty and increased Charisma (+2). The recipient of this gift must save vs. spells or become insufferably vain and narcissistic. If this is done in a time reversed by the *fate's charm*, only the narcissism remains with that person.

If precious gemstones are placed under the slain dragon's tongue, up to seven of the most valuable stones instantly gain the powers of randomly determined *ioun stones*, although they do not circle the owner.

Any divination spell cast by a wizard or priest in the presence of the dragon within two rounds of its death has the effect of a *commune* spell.

Finally, anyone bitten by Ailamere at the moment she was slain (within 3 of the initiative roll of the mortal blow) gains the ability to transmute liquid water into solid form, like the dragon's breath weapon, by touch, once per week. This affects 100 cubic feet of water (not a 100' cube) or one creature.



forms of drowned trees blur the rest of the lake's shoreline and provide only minimal cover for anyone attempting to hide. Heroes must wade into the water to see the lake's surface and the dragon's cave.

Each person venturing into water more than 4′ deep has a 25% chance per turn of attracting 1-6 giant gar. The gar may even attack those in a boat (10% chance per turn) but will not persist in this. The giant gar never approach closer than 50 yards from the dragon's lair, even when pursuing prey.

Giant gar (1-6): INT animal; AL N; AC 3; MV swim 30; HD 8; hp 41, 38, 36 (×2), 35, 29; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 5-20; SA swallow whole; SZ L-H; ML 10; XP 2,000; MC/117-118 (Fish).

Few animals live within a mile of the lair, and virtually none at the lake itself. Only the occasional raven has the audacity to make itself seen or heard, cawing from a perch over the black waters. These birds can sense the dragon's approach and flee before it is visible. Much useful information can be gained from the birds with a *speak with animals* spell. The ravens can tell the PCs which cave the dragon occupies, when it most often leaves (at night), and whether it is currently at home.

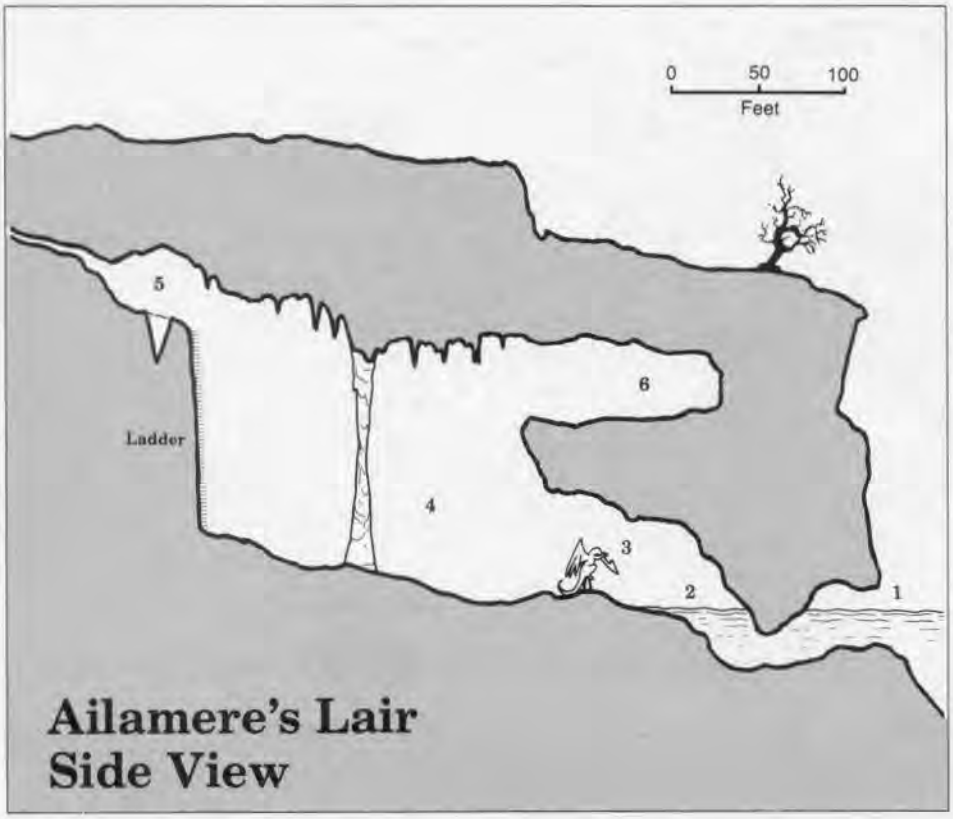
In addition to the water-level cave (area 1) that opens into the dragon's lair, two other caves are visible in the face of the 200′-high cliff. About 50 yards to the south of Ailamere's cave (left as you face it), 40′ above the water's surface, there is a horizontal fissure 30′ wide, 4′ high, and 15′ deep (area A). Little natural cover or concealment will aid trespassers here. The convex curve of the cliff makes observation of the dragon's lair difficult, but resourceful adventurers could nonetheless make use of this fissure.

Another hundred yards farther south is a roughly circular cave entrance (area B), 10′ in diameter and 160′ above the water (30′ below the cliff top). From the entrance, this cave appears to be about 60′ deep (placing those crouched at the far back end slightly beyond the reach of the dragon's mouth but not her breath attack). A 3′-diameter tunnel at the back of the cave snakes up to the clifftop 30′ above. The narrow beach beneath this cave, at the base of the cliff, is just large enough to permit three normal-sized humans to stand side by side out of the water.

It is extremely difficult to enter Ailamere's lair without alerting her to the presence of intruders. Even if she is out when the lair is entered, she can detect signs of intrusion when she returns. Ailamere's chances for detecting the PCs in her lair are as follows:

Party has light source: 99%
Hear footsteps or whispers: 80%
Hear breathing: 5% per PC or retainer
Trap at area 5 sprung: 30%
Wet footprints: 90%, −10% per hour since they were made
Fire used in cave: 99%
Wall damage (spikes, spells): 80%
Statue damaged (area 3): 99%
Gray oozes killed (areas 4-5): 30% each
Coins stolen: 80%
Jewels stolen: 90%
Swords or magical items stolen: 100%

1. Dead End? The cave opens directly onto the lake, so there is no way to walk into it. Adventurers must swim, fly, climb, or rappel down the cliff to enter. The cave entrance is 50′ wide; the floor of the cave is 30′ below the surface of the water at the entrance; the roof is about 15′ above water. When the PCs enter this cave, they may believe that



Ailamere's Lair
Side View

they have been misdirected by Gorbo or were mistaken about seeing the beast enter here. The cave appears to go only 50′ into the cliff, where it dead-ends at a wall of slime-covered limestone glistening in the sunlight (or moonlight) from behind the party.

The route the dragon takes is underwater, beneath the wall where the passage seems to end. This is the only entrance, so anyone who intends to enter the lair must use magic or must hold his breath and swim 40′ underwater before reaching air on the other side. The side-view diagram of the lair clarifies this feature.

2. Surfacing. Anyone entering the lair surfaces here. The cave floor rises sharply until it is 1′-2′ below the water level, where it slopes gently again. The passage width increases to about 70′. Stones litter the floor.

Those who surface slowly and as silently as possible have a base 10% chance of not waking the dragon with their noise, modified for race, armor, and Dexterity. Thieves may use their normal chances to move silently. If Ailamere is awake, she automatically hears everyone except thieves; a thief can surface undetected on a roll under half his Move Silently percentage.

If Ailamere is in her lair and is expecting intruders, she may wait here until they surface, then breathe her water-solidifying gas on them. Those who fail a saving throw vs. breath weapon (at −4) become imbedded in solid water! A PC who saves successfully escapes the breath entirely but cannot resurface within the lair until someone breaks the icelike sheet that covers the water's surface; this requires a solid blow from a blunt weapon, impossible underwater without a ring or spell of *free action* or *airy water.* Even if the dragon does not seal the water surface immediately, heroes entering the cave will be drenched and particularly vulnerable to her breath weapon.

3. Wall and Statue. Here, Ailamere used her *waveform* power to shape solid water around a crude stone wall into a perfectly smooth, pearlescent, 7′-high wall capped with a 15′-tall (60′ long) statue of herself, rearing in a menacing pose. The wall stands about 50′ away from where most PCs surface, so only those with *continual light* spells or infravision can see the statue immediately. Others will not see it until they get closer.

> Still wiping the water from your eyes, you blink and squint to focus on a dimly reflected form against the cold darkness of the cavern before you. It's a dragon! The creature stands facing you on a wall or shelf. Its neck is extended as if the dragon is about to breathe on you!

Only the rare PC who calmly continues to stare at the dragon will notice that it is not moving. If the player immediately declares that his character dives underwater and swims toward the entrance, Ailamere will certainly be awakened by the splashing, if she is in her lair.

The wall blocks off the passage entirely and is difficult to climb (−50%), but the adjacent natural cave walls do have hand holds. It is also possible to build a cairn of stones and climb over the wall. The wall's main purpose is to confine the gray oozes in area 4. Any vandalism to the statue would infuriate Ailamere when she discovers it (or hears it being done, if she is in the lair) and cause her to seek out and recklessly attack the perpetrators. Contact with or close proximity to flame evaporates the material of the statue. (It does not melt.)

4. Main Chamber. The tunnel ceiling rises to 200′ in this area, and the space opens up to a broad cavern. Ailamere has cleared away most of the stalagmites that once clustered in the center of the cave, so that it is now safe for her to jump to this level from the one in which she lives (area 6).

Three gray oozes wander in this area, blending effectively with the moist cave floor. There is a 1-in-8 chance per round spent in this cavern that the PCs will encounter the oozes. It typically takes seven rounds to walk straight to the opposite side.

Gray ooze (3): INT animal; AL N; AC 8; MV 1; HD 3+3; hp 17, 16, 9; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-16; SA corrodes metal; SD immune to fire, cold, and spells; SZ M-L; ML 10; XP 270; MC/278 (Ooze/Slime/Jelly).

The cavern walls are pocked with alcoves and narrow fissures, but none are deep and wide enough to protect a full-sized human. Only halflings and

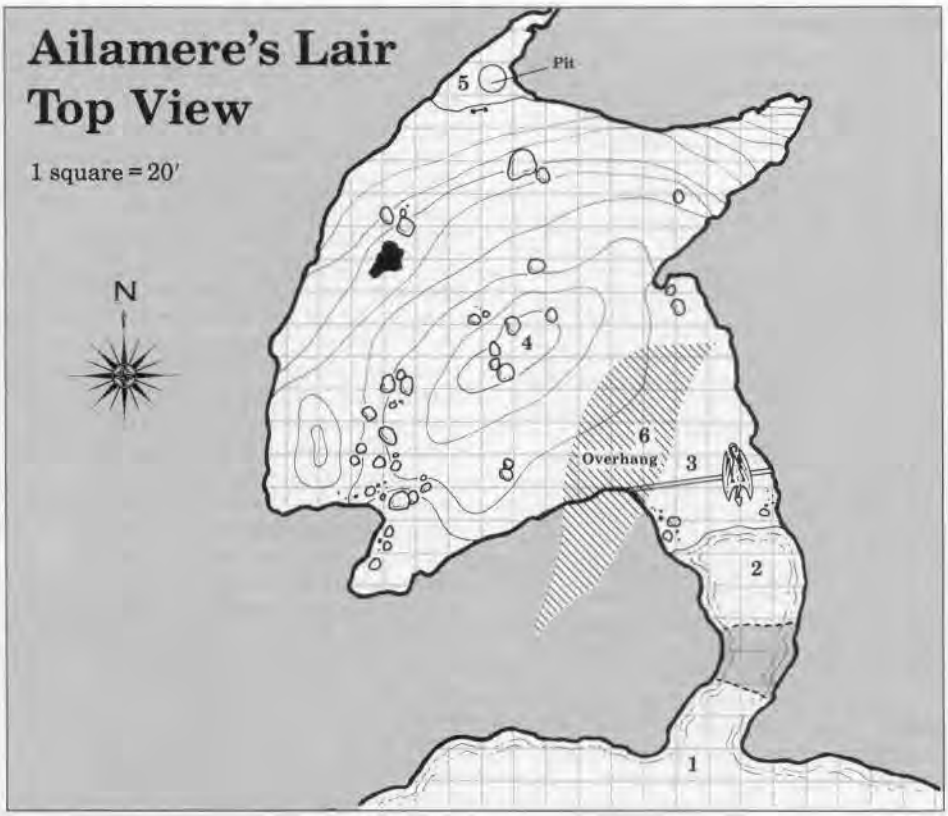
magically diminished characters can effectively take refuge in them. The side of the chamber opposite the entrance is a slippery, nearly vertical wall with a rusty (but sturdy) metal ladder secured to it. The ladder bottom ends 4' from the ground, because of the activity of the oozes.

5. Trap. At the top of the ladder, the slope of the wall becomes gentle enough to ascend on foot. The stone here is the lustrous off-white of transmuted water, resembling mother-of-pearl. Here, Ailamere dug a 30'-deep, 20'-wide conical pit. She made the sides smooth with water, her breath, and *waveform,* then placed a **gray ooze** (hp 11; THAC0 5) in the pit and covered it with a thin layer of solid water that will break under 200 lbs. of pressure.

Anyone standing on the cracking surface may jump free with a successful Dexterity ability check. The DM should modify the chance of success according to the PCs' locations relative to each other and to the edge of the pit. (A reasonable range of modifiers would be −6 for a PC alone in the center to +5 for a PC at the edge, next to alert comrades. The floor around the pit is very smooth and difficult to grip.) Falling through causes only 1-6 hp damage, due to the pit's sloped walls, but the walls are very hard to climb (−30%), doubly so while the ravenous ooze attacks. In the confinement of the conical pit, the ooze's attacks are virtually automatic hits, thus the improved THAC0.

Beyond the pit, the cavern closes in to a 3'-wide passage that continues to rise, bend, and narrow. It would be possible for up to eight human-sized individuals to hide here, out of reach of the dragon's grasp or breath. Against a party holed up here, Ailamere may wait (she is very patient), block up the opening, or use an illusion to lure them into range. This tunnel does lead to the surface, but it becomes too narrow for anyone not insect-sized or in gaseous form.

6. Sleeping Chamber. This is where Ailamere sleeps and hoards her wealth. About 60' above the cavern floor, the very presence of this deep shelf is difficult to detect from area 4. There are no paths up to this level; one must fly or climb the steep, slick walls. All stone surfaces within this chamber have been



coated with a thin layer of lustrous transmuted water, giving it an ethereal quality. Thirty-three gems of varying sizes (100 gp (×10), 50 gp (×12), 10 gp (×5), 1 gp (×6)) have been set into this pearlescent patina in a seemingly random arrangement. However, the gems depict the precise representation of the stars of the winter sky, as seen from the island home of the prismatic dragons. An accurate drawing of this starscape, with the observation that a ship's sail is among the treasure, would be most valuable to Rondelle, satisfying her question about the dragon's origin.

The treasure, piled up neatly and systematically, consists of 10,044 ep, 1,100 gp, and 2,500 pp, two bricks of gold (300 gp each) and an open chest full of jewels worth 5,000 gp (×7), 1,000 gp (×10), 500 gp (×14), and 100 gp (×66).

Standing to one side is a suit of field plate armor (its original owner's skeleton still inside). Other neat piles contain 33 fine swords of various lengths (no curved blades or scabbards, though), a saddle with silver inlay, four horseshoes, an empty chest with a mirrored interior lid, a folded cloak made of fine silk, four 50' lengths of rope, and a huge folded sail from a sea vessel. (Ailamere uses this to transport her treasure.)

A walnut box atop one pile contains a *ring of bureaucratic wizardry* (from the *Tome of Magic*) and a *wand of fire,* with its four command words written in *illusionary script,* readable only by good-aligned wizards. The suggestion imparted in an unauthorized reader is to point the wand at a companion and cry, "Bow, infidel, and swear loyalty to Lathander or by the power of Zethopac, this wand shall smite you and turn your worthless bones to ashes!" (A bard, priest, or wizard might know of Zethopac, an invoker who was known for his hot temper and his abundant use of cliches and banal threats. He was a zealot for the god Lathander but gravely misunderstood the humble ways of that order. Lathander can be replaced by any power, or the *suggestion* planted could be entirely different.)

A high alcove, obviously carved out by the dragon, contains 678 sp and five quartz crystals, which she loves to eat. Most of this treasure was not acquired directly from humans, but rather from other monsters.

Making Peace

Ailamere communicates in an arrogant and ostensibly confident voice. If the PCs engage her in conversation (or use *ESP*), they can learn that Ailamere likes her new lair but worries that the goblin invaders could ruin her new home. (She does not recognize any significant difference between goblins and the kobolds that drove her away from her previous lair.) This gives the party several advantages in dealing with her.

She hates goblins so much that, if she learned of the impending invasion, she would attack the goblins without being asked to or being offered a reward—although she might demand one anyway, depending on the PCs' approach to the subject. She would also be grateful for the information in the long run. Fighting off the goblins could begin a protective, vaguely maternal relationship with the local human communities.

Finally, knowing that little monsters can take refuge beyond her reach, she is interested in acquiring allies small enough to root them out.

Establishing detente between the dragon and the irate citizens who want it slain but need it for protection can be extremely difficult for the PCs, especially if they are too proud to flatter the creature and give her gifts. Ailamere's self-importance may appear to be a stumbling block, but it is a weakness that can be exploited in negotiations.

Ailamere will allow the residents of Weedwater to remain within her territory in return for 3,000 sp rent per month, which the town (even after being repopulated) cannot afford. However, if the party proposes to Ailamere that "these weak, helpless humans need the protection and guidance of the mighty, most magnificent and benevolent benefactor, Ailamere, Dragonqueen," she will protect Weedwater in return for symbolic gestures such as ceremonies and feasts in her honor, nonhuman sacrifices, songs, paintings, statues made of stone or even corn husks, etc. The artistic community of Primsen could be of great help in designing such decorative but intrinsically valueless gifts.

The surviving citizens of Weedwater are, quite understandably, full of resentment against the dragon that will require strong, persuasive arguments to quell. A bard PC could be instrumental in keeping the people in line. However, unless the bard wants to retire in the area, the PCs might suggest to Rondelle that she move to Weedwater, where she can mediate between the people and the dragon, and continue to study the creature in its natural setting. There will soon be many immigrants from Primsen who vehemently support peaceful relations—unemployed and poor farmers and influential land barons who have cheaply acquired the land of deceased Weedwater farmers, and artists coming for the steady work available in a town that needs to placate an egotistical dragon. John Tillman, if he is still alive, will not rest until the dragon is slain, so he may have to be *charmed* or removed from the area.

Ailamere's land claim will soon expand to include the mines of Kilarken, not merely the road to it, so negotiations should be carried out now. The silver-mining operation is profitable but could not easily sustain a monthly rent of 3,000 sp. A creative PC might suggest some other form of tribute, but symbolic gestures this far from her lair do not carry as much weight with Ailamere as they do in Weedwater.

The miners have two useless by-products of their work that the dragon would deem sufficient tribute: Quartz is found in high quantities and discarded, as is the slag from silver refining. Ailamere has never eaten silver slag, and the miners will not suggest it, so it is up to the PCs to offer her this delicacy. If Ailamere takes a bit of the silver slag, she finds it very tasty and mildly intoxicating. If offered quartz only, she demands an additional 100 sp per month.

Experience

On a research expedition like this one, it would be inappropriate to grant experience solely for foes vanquished. Here are some guidelines for awarding experience points on a group or individual basis, as appropriate:

Per question answered: XP equal to the gp value of Rondelle's reward for each question
Ailamere slain permanently: 0 XP
Party defeats Ailamere nonlethally: 10,000 XP
Party slays Ailamere in *fate's charm* period: 5,000 XP each time
Ailamere prevents goblin invasion: 3,000 XP
Ailamere makes peace with Weedwater: 3,000 XP
Ailamere makes peace with Kilarken: 3,000 XP
Salvador, Mongdro, and Fiftagh stopped (see page 27): 1,000 XP
Gorbo's help enlisted: 500 XP
Rondelle persuaded to move to Weedwater: 500 XP

Final Note to the Dungeon Master

Much of the information presented here may not actually come into play when you run this adventure. It is not as important that you know every nuance of the adventure as it is that you understand Ailamere's psyche and play her appropriately. She is your player character in an environment where you do not know what is going to happen. You should be impartial and not guide the adventure in any preconceived direction, although the goblin invasion is a device that you may have to take some control of, especially if the PCs are being indecisive. Let things happen and don't be disappointed with your players if they don't think of things that seem obvious as you read this. It's hard to learn a dragon's ways, and discovering a greater danger beyond the original mission's scope may be harder still. Ω

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Dragon, Prismatic

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any temperate or tropical
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary or clan
ACTIVE TIME:	Any (especially day)
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	High (13-14)
TREASURE:	See below
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1 (2-4)
ARMOR CLASS:	0 (base)
MOVEMENT:	9, Fly 30 (C), Swim 12
HIT DICE:	11 (base)
THAC0:	9 (at 11 HD)
NO OF ATTACKS:	3 plus special
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-6/1-6/3-22 (1d20 + 2)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Breath, spells, tail, wing, kick
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Fear
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Variable
SIZE:	G (30′ base)
MORALE:	Fanatic (16 base)
XP VALUE:	See below

Prismatic dragons are closely related to the gem dragons, although some of the characteristics of prismatic dragons and their almost superstitious reverence for copper dragons suggest that they are somehow related to that subspecies as well. While all dragons are greedy and self-important, prismatic dragons take these traits to the extreme. Sustained flattery and gifts of precious metals and gems can influence and cloud the judgment of a prismatic dragon more than one would expect from so intelligent a creature. A gift that exploits the dragon's boundless vanity, such as a mirror or a song exalting its wisdom and beauty, can make this creature forget almost any wrong done against it.

While not actually evil, prismatic dragons quickly grow impatient with talk that is not of immediate interest to them, and will silence such banter in the most expedient way possible, typically with a spell or a fierce tail slap.

Prismatic dragons are true dragons, having four legs, two wings, a long neck and tail, and a breath weapon. Their eggs are pale pink to yellow, with many copper flecks. At birth, a prismatic dragon's scales are a bright, mirrorlike silver except for several distinct bands of color—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple—in its midsection. Over time, the colors spread and fade, and the shiny scales give over to pastel hues with dazzling refractive qualities (much like the holographic dragon on the cover of DRAGON® Magazine #200).

As its natural pigmentation fades, the dragon also achieves greater control over its shimmering scales. By the adult stage, the dragon's scales are a fairly homogenous translucent blue-gray, with patches or bands of color confined to the wing tips, claws, and face. At this stage, a prismatic dragon develops its *hypnotic pattern* power. This power increases with age; great wyrms are virtually invisible and can project complex illusions simply by manipulating their scales.

Prismatic dragons speak their own language, which is 30% intelligible to speakers of the copper dragon tongue. They do not share a language with other dragons, although many (10%, +5% per age category) can converse with any intelligent creature.

Combat: A prismatic dragon prefers to use its breath weapon and spells to kill, wound, or incapacitate its enemies before engaging in direct combat, lest it run the risk (however slight) of having the beauty of its magnificent hide diminished by the weapons of "mortal pests." Insulting words or deeds may, however, cause these hot-tempered creatures to abandon this cautious approach. Prismatic dragons eschew enchantment/charm spells, viewing them as unnecessary for beings as awesome as themselves. Alteration and conjuration/summoning spells are much more to their liking.

Breath weapon/Special Abilities: The breath weapon of a prismatic dragon is a cloud of gas 30′ in diameter and 10′ high that rolls forward at the rate of 10′ per round until it disperses in a number of rounds equal to the dragon's age category. This gas is heavy, so if it is exhaled at a height of greater than 10′, it travels downward as well, at the same speed. This cloud contains swirling patterns of sparkling particles and bright, interweaving colors, requiring those who view it to save vs. spells or be affected as if by a *rainbow pattern* spell. This effect requires illumination at least as bright as torch light. Some factors that modify a PC's saving throw vs. spells (such as an illusionist's +1 bonus for spells of the same level, or the magic resistance associated with a dwarf's or halfling's Constitution) do not apply to this save, but the magical defense bonus for high Wisdom does help PCs avoid becoming enthralled by the gas cloud. Even the dragon itself can be vulnerable to the hypnotic effects of the cloud—on a roll of 1 on 1d20, a prismatic dragon below adult age is enthralled by its own cloud for one full round, whereupon it gets another saving throw.

The prismatic dragon's breath attack has an even more unusual and dramatic effect: It transmutes water into a milky, luminous solid similar in appearance to mother-of-pearl. Wherever the gas cloud contacts the surface of a lake or stream, the water solidifies to a depth of ½" per age category of the dragon. This material is not ice; it is not cold and does not melt. However, it does evaporate under the same conditions as liquid water. Exposed to sunlight, a mass of solid water will eventually break up and dissolve. Under most conditions, solid water shares all saving throws with wood of the same thickness. (See the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide,* page 39.)

When exposed to a prismatic dragon's gas cloud, creatures made entirely of water (such as water weirds or water elementals) must save vs. breath weapon or die. Any water creature that survives suffers 1-12 hp damage per age category of the dragon and is *slowed* for 1-4 turns. On the other hand, a solidified water creature inflicts 50% greater damage with all physical attacks for as long as it is *slowed.*

Creatures whose bodies consist primarily of water (such as humans) are also vulnerable to a prismatic dragon's breath weapon. The gas permeates their skin, making it crack and flake off like peeling bark. The vapor causes severe trauma to organs and muscles, making any motion extremely painful. In game terms, victims suffer three effects:

1. An initial 4d6 hp damage when exposed to the gas. Prolonged exposure does not inflict additional damage.
2. The equivalent of a *slow* spell for one round per age category of the dragon.
3. While *slowed,* an additional 1d8 hp damage per round of strenuous activity (such as running or melee combat), and 1d8 − 4 hp damage per round of milder activity (walking, spell-casting, firing a bow). A negative number indicates insufficient pain to disrupt a spell. A successful saving throw vs. breath weapon halves the initial damage and the duration of the *slow* effect but does not change the lingering damage for straining traumatized muscles.

Prismatic dragons usually live near large bodies of water, where they can use their breath weapons to maximum advantage. They often lie in ambush in a lake or deep river, and use their wings or their *waveform* power (achieved at

the juvenile age) to drench prey with water. This done, their victims are vulnerable to one additional power of the dragon's breath. If a victim's saving throw fails, all saturated clothing, hair, etc. hardens into a solid shell, much like a body cast. The shell must be broken before the person can move freely again.

Wet surfaces that do not absorb water well (leather, bare skin, metal) become covered with a very thin, brittle layer of solid water, as easily broken as an egg shell. Most people will have no difficulty speaking or moving their hands. Hardened clothing must be shattered; a successful bend bars roll indicates that the shell on one limb is cracked enough to permit movement. An immobilized, statuelike victim can tip himself over, shattering the shell if it fails to save vs. crushing blow.

No amount of tapping from within the shell can break it. However, a solid blow against the coated victim (AC 6, minus magical bonuses) will free one limb or the torso if the shell fails its save against crushing blow. The shell absorbs 5 hp damage from a blow; the rest affects the victim within. When one part of the shell shatters, the shell covering an adjacent limb is 50% likely to crack as well.

Prismatic dragons are not born with any exceptional abilities, but they soon develop some formidable powers. At the very young stage, they are adept enough in the manipulation of the color of their scales to simulate the *color spray* spell once per day, cast at the level of their combat modifier (two levels higher if the dragon has control over the primary source of illumination). **Juvenile:** *Waveform* three times per day. (*Waveform* allows the caster to mold a 10′ cube of water per level into various forms, such as enormous waves. On solidified water, this power operates like a *stoneshape* spell.) **Adult:** *Hypnotic pattern* twice per day, even while attacking or spellcasting. **Old:** *Camouflage* ability—50% invisible plus 10% per age category beyond old. **Venerable:** Any of the following illusions, in addition to attacks and spells, up to 20 rounds per day altogether: *spectral force, hallucinatory terrain, vacancy, change self, mislead,* and *displacement* (as per the cloak). **Great wyrm:** All of the above powers at will.

Habitat/Society: Most prismatic dragons come from an uncharted island in a tropical sea, where dozens of their kind live in an anarchic but rarely violent society in which power and prestige are won by competitions of magic, innate powers, and physical beauty. At the center of this island is a huge volcanic crater lined with immense crystals and precious gems. According to the legends of prismatic dragons, they and all other gem dragon species originated here. They say that the Creator Dragon (often described as a copper dragon great wyrm) carved dragon forms out of the native crystals of this island and breathed life into them. As she dug deeper, the Creator Dragon found increasingly precious gems from which to shape her likeness. Eventually, she found the most precious and beautiful crystal she had ever seen. The other gems—emerald, sapphire, ruby, diamond—were flat and ugly by comparison, so the Creator Dragon threw those dragons into the sea to drown, but some escaped their fate, and their descendants now live a wrongful existence against her will. From this most beautiful gem the Creator Dragon carved the first prismatic dragon and gave it life with her last breath.

Ecology: Like most dragons, prismatic dragons can eat almost anything, although they prefer to hunt and eat large fish and marine mammals and wash down their meal with quartz, sometimes cleansing the palate with some silver. In general, prismatic dragons consider the gem dragons their enemies and use lesser species (like humans) to destroy them.

Strangely, prismatic dragons never mate on their home island, so young adult dragons are encouraged to go out into the world. Females are welcomed back only if they return with young, but males may never return. Every 20 to 22 years, a prismatic dragon female (young adult to very old) living abroad becomes overwhelmed by her mating instincts. The urge is very strong, for she can mate successfully for only two weeks. During this time, she exhausts herself by flying as high and as long as possible during the day, releasing powerful pheromones that can travel up to 200 miles, and reflecting the sunlight in urgent (but graceful) rhythms and color sequences.

This light is a mating beacon that no male of the species can resist. When a male prismatic dragon smells the pheromones, he neglects his regular duties (guarding his treasure and defending his territory from enemies) and scans the horizon for the beacon. If the pattern of the lights is clumsy, he may not respond. If more than one male responds, they compete with mating lights of their own.

When more than one prismatic dragon is encountered, it is invariably a mother and her young, never a mated pair.

Age	Body	Tail	AC	Spells W/P	MR	Treasure	XP
1	2′-5′	1′-5′	4	Nil	Nil	Nil	3,000
2	5′-11′	5′-12′	2	Nil	Nil	Nil	5,000
3	11′-22′	12′-21′	1	1	Nil	Nil	8,000
4	22′-33′	21′-28′	0	2	Nil	½ H	11,000
5	33′-45′	28′-36′	0	21	15%	H	15,000
6	45′-60′	36′-45′	−1	31	20%	H	16,000
7	60′-74′	45′-54′	−2	311	25%	E, H	18,000
8	74′-90′	54′-62′	−3	421	30%	E, H	19,000
9	90′-117′	62′-75′	−4	422/1	35%	T, H (×2)	20,000
10	117′-120′	75′-81′	−5	4321/11	40%	T, H(×2)	21,000
11	120′-127′	81′-89′	−6	4322/21	50%	T (×2), H(×2)	23,000
12	127′-131′	89′-92′	−6	44321/321	65%	T, H (×2), Z	25,000

THE

High on a hilltop, a mountain of trouble

BY STEPHEN J. SMITH

"The Witch of Windcrag" is a D&D® SideTrek designed for a party of 4-6 player characters, levels 2-3 (about 12 total levels). The DM will need only the Classic DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® *Rules and Adventures Book* (DD) from the boxed game or the D&D *Rules Cyclopedia* (RC) to run this short encounter. The DM can detail the setting for any game world or campaign.

For the Player Characters

Since you were a child, you've heard stories about the Witch of Windcrag. Your parents must have warned you a thousand times, "Stay in the yard or the witch will swoop down out of the clouds and carry you off for her dinner," or "If you don't go to bed right now the witch will come and turn you into a bat. Then you can stay up all night—every night!" You've grown up hearing a wide array of tales about the mysterious old spellcaster rumored to dwell in a cliffside cave on Windcrag Mountain. The only consistent detail in these stories is the location of the witch's abode, so you and your friends are mounting an expedition to investigate her lair and discover the truth about this legendary figure.

At the start of play, provide each PC with one randomly determined rumor by rolling 1d10 and consulting the "Rumors" sidebar. Each PC should have heard a different rumor. If the heroes express an interest in learning even more about the Witch of Windcrag before embarking on their expedition, the DM may allow them to hear one or two additional rumors from a typical NPC source (an innkeeper, village elder, or traveling merchant).

For the Dungeon Master

Of all the rumors presented in the sidebar, #7 comes closest to the truth. The Witch of Windcrag is actually a harpy named Kyrrak. Most of the other rumors are the wild speculations of imaginative locals, but some of the rumors hint at the true nature of the Witch of Windcrag. The references to a "giant eagle," for example, probably came from individuals who caught a quick glimpse of Kyrrak flying near the mountain and mistook her for a great bird of prey.

Kyrrak is not a typical harpy; she is a 3rd-level wokan (a monster spellcaster capable of using magic-user/elf spells). She is also quite shrewd and knows better than to prey heavily on humans in the Windcrag area. Kyrrak has heard horror stories about those particularly nasty and aggressive humans called "adventurers" and wants nothing to do with them. She feeds mainly on the fauna that inhabit a forested valley north of the mountain. Still, she has an occasional craving for human flesh and sometimes attacks and kills lone travelers, hiding their remains when she has finished feasting.

Kyrrak's Lair

The DM may choose to play out the PCs' journey to the harpy's cave or may simply describe the trek up the mountainside, past the tree line to the narrow, winding ledge that leads to Kyrrak's cliffside lair. If the DM wants to play out the trip and needs monsters to spice up the heroes' journey, a run-in with a mountain lion (DD/74, RC/163) and an attack by 1-4 stirges (DD/93, RC/208) would be appropriate. As the PCs

WITCH OF WINDCRAG

approach their goal, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> A narrow ledge crawls up the sheer, 100'-high cliff face and ends at the dark mouth of a cave. After negotiating this climb, you find yourselves at the entrance to the witch's dwelling. The overwhelming stench of offal and carrion comes from the pitch-black cave, and over the howling of the wind you hear a faint tinkling sound.

1. Kyrrak's Security System. The strange tinkling noise the PCs hear at the cave entrance becomes louder as they proceed deeper into the cave. The sound comes from a line of wind chimes strung just inside the entrance to Kyrrak's lair as a crude alarm. The string of chimes—hanging 1½' off the ground—stretches across the entry passage and has been treated with an *invisibility* spell. Unless the chimes are detected, the first rank of PCs to enter the lair walks right into them, and their jangling reverberates throughout the cave. Each PC must roll a Dexterity ability check or trip over the line of chimes and sprawl to the floor. Those who fall must then make Strength checks or drop any weapon, torch, lantern or other items they are holding.

If the PCs blunder into the harpy's alarm, the jangling chimes and falling bodies will alert Kyrrak to the intruders. She serenades visitors with her *charming* song. If claimed and cleaned by the adventurers, the fine porcelain chimes are worth 100 gp (the harpy got them from a merchant she attacked near her mountain).

2. The Chamber of Bones.

> The stench that assails your nostrils as you enter this vast, dark chamber is nauseating. The entire floor is covered with bones, dung, and other refuse. Two passages opposite the entry tunnel lead deeper into the mountain. The northern passage, however, is located atop a rocky shelf 20' above the cavern floor.

The bones are the remains of small forest animals, although a few human and demihuman bones can be found intermingled with the others. There is nothing of value on the cavern floor.

This chamber does contain a cunning trap set by the harpy. The southern, ground-level tunnel leading to area 3 seems passable but is blocked by a huge spider web rendered *invisible* by one of Kyrrak's spells. (The spider that spun this web dwells elsewhere on the mountain and is not present. See "Kyrrak's Tactics" for details.) If this hazard is not discovered (with a *detect invisible* spell or by probing with a 10' pole, for example), the first rank of PCs taking this path blunders into the web and is trapped (treat as a *web* spell).

If the party circumvented the chime alarm at area 1, Kyrrak (who sits in her nest at area 3) becomes aware of the PCs if anyone speaks above a whisper in area 2 or if someone stumbles into the web trap. Intruders are promptly greeted with a welcoming song. The crooning harpy uses her mesmerizing song to lure *charmed* victims down the ground-level tunnel into the waiting web. When at least one PC is snared in the web, Kyrrak flies through the elevated northern passage to engage the remaining intruders.

The PCs may reach the passage atop the ledge by using magical flight or levitation. A thief who makes a successful Climb Walls roll may also scale the rough, dry cliff. A stout stalagmite sits

Rumors (Roll 1d10)

1. The witch dwells on Windcrag Mountain because she specializes in air-based spells. She doesn't like to be disturbed and sometimes hurls intruders off the mountainside with magical gusts of wind.
2. The witch is an evil, sadistic, cannibalistic savage. She devours children and waylays lone travelers to obtain their blood for vile rituals and experiments.
3. The witch is actually a learned sage and will research any question posed to her—for a price. Some say that this price is monetary (ranging from a single silver piece to a thousand gold coins). Others maintain that the price is more sinister (from an ounce of the inquirer's blood to his very soul).
4. The witch was once a beautiful and talented bard in a distant land. The queen of that realm, envious of the bard's radiant face and melodious singing voice, ordered her court wizard to place a curse on the woman. This curse transformed the bard into an ugly old hag with a hoarse, croaking voice. Now this cursed lady dwells alone in a cave on Windcrag Mountain, learning the secrets of spellcasting in the hope that she can one day undo the spell of the evil queen's sorcerer.
5. The witch is actually part sorceress and part brigand. She attacks lone travelers and even small caravans for loot to pay for the strange magical research and experiments that she conducts in her mountainside lair. The witch is also said to kill some victims for their blood.
6. The witch is actually a shapeshifter—a lycanthrope—and can turn into a giant eagle. This explains why she dwells in her aerie atop Windcrag Mountain. When encountered in human form, the witch is a kindly old woman. When in her eagle form, however, the witch's demeanor is unpredictable and she sometimes attacks innocent humans.
7. The witch isn't even human. She's a hideous, evil, man-eating monster with wings and razor-sharp teeth and claws.
8. The ugly old witch is actually a beautiful young sorceress who used her magical powers to rob a king's treasury in some distant land. She uses spells of illusion to give herself the appearance of an old woman and sometimes creates huge phantasmal eagles to drive away intruders. Much of her plundered wealth still lies stashed in her mountain cave.
9. The witch has a pet giant eagle that guards her cave and does her bidding. A few folks claim that this eagle does good deeds (such as warning travelers of impending thunderstorms), but most people state that the bird attacks and devours anything it meets.
10. Ding-dong, the witch is dead! Her ghost and pet giant eagle still haunt her mountain roost, however, guarding the deceased spellcaster's magical treasures.

on the ledge, and a rope may be tied to the rock formation and lowered to those below.

3. Kyrrak's Roost.

> The floor of this cavern is littered with bones and dung, but not nearly as profusely as in the previous chamber. At the eastern side of the room—on a rocky shelf 15′ above the floor—rests a huge bird's nest built from straw, grass, and small tree branches.

Kyrrak is resting here in her nest, if the PCs successfully bypassed the *invisible* chimes at area 1 and then climbed the 20′ cliff at area 2, using the northern passage to reach area 3. She immediately notices the PCs when they enter the cavern and attacks (See "Kyrrak's Tactics.") Human and elven PCs can easily make the 10′ leap from the northern ledge to the cavern floor, but dwarves and halflings must roll a Dexterity check or suffer 1-4 hp damage from the jump.

Kyrrak (3rd-level harpy wokan): AC 7; HD 3** (M); hp 18; MV 60′ (20′), fly 150′ (50′); THAC0 17; #AT 2 talons/1 arrow or dagger plus special; Dmg 1-4/1-4 (claws)/1-6 (arrow) or 1-4 (dagger) plus *charm;* Save F6; ML 7; INT 7; AL C; XP 65; DD/83, RC/182. Spells: *sleep* (×2), *invisibility.* The song of a harpy *charms* all listeners who fail a Saving Throw vs. Spells.

Kyrrak is armed with a dagger (strapped to one of her birdlike legs) and a short bow with 20 arrows. She also wears a *ring of animal control* on her right index finger and an *amulet of protection from sleep spells* around her neck. This latter item protects its wearer from up to three *sleep* spells per day.

Kyrrak's Tactics

The harpy's first action when confronted by intruders is to sing her *charming* song. She then either lures her enthralled victims into the web trap at area 2 or orders them to protect her from the attacks of their "deluded" friends (those who resisted her song). *Charmed* PCs may be freed from the harpy's influence by a *dispel magic* spell (treat the harpy's song as 3rd-level magic), the use of another *charm person* spell on the victim, or through the death of the controlling monster.

Next, Kyrrak tries to cast her *sleep* spells at the party in the hope of gaining a quick victory. Regardless of the outcome of this spell, she then attacks the party from a distance with her bow and arrows. The harpy is shrewd enough to target unarmored magic-users. If she remains in her nest, PC missile attacks against her suffer a −2 penalty to hit because the nest provides her with some cover. The harpy may also choose to attack with her bow while hovering near the cavern ceiling (out of the range of melee attacks) but cannot cast spells while hovering. If melee combat is unavoidable, Kyrrak attacks with her dagger and rear talons. She saves her *invisibility* spell for a quick escape.

If the harpy fails a morale check, she flies from her lair and heads straight for a small nearby cavern. Kyrrak returns home six turns later leading a giant black widow spider held in thrall by her *ring of animal control.* After directing the spider to attack, the harpy joins the fray herself. If she fails a second morale check, Kyrrak decides to fly north and search for a safer lair.

Spider, giant black widow: AC 6; HD 3* (M); hp 15; MV 60′ (20′), web 120′ (40′); THAC0 17; #AT 1 bite; Dmg 2-12 plus poison; Save F2; ML 8; INT 0; AL N; XP 50; DD/93, RC/206. Anyone bitten by this arachnid must make a Saving Throw vs. Poison or die in one turn.

Concluding the Adventure

Once Kyrrak has been slain or driven off, the victorious PCs may search her lair for hidden treasure. The harpy keeps all her wealth stashed in her nest in area 3. Her treasure trove consists of three large sacks filled with coins. One sack contains 587 cp; another holds 336 sp and 210 ep. The last is filled with 357 gp and 125 pp, a pair of silver bracelets engraved with elven runes (worth 50 gp each), and a thick gold chain with a dragon's head pendant inlaid with pearl eyes (value 1,500 gp). Ω

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gem of insight (worth at least 5,000 gp).

When the adventurers encounter Tundra, she has only days or perhaps hours to live. This great wyrm is at less than peak physical and psychological condition. Being at death's door halves her regular +12 damage bonus with physical attacks. She also suffers from a skin disease that causes her scales to fall off. This disease, and general lethargy caused by the hot environment, invokes a +5 penalty to her armor class and renders her vulnerable to normal missiles. Lung problems make Tundra cough uncontrollably when she exerts herself, making her breath weapon erratic. Each round presents a 10% chance for Tundra to accidentally spew her breath weapon in whichever direction she faces. Because she can breathe frost only once every three rounds, the result in any other round is merely dry hacking. Senility and loss of concentration result in a 20% chance of failure during spellcasting. In her weakness, Tundra can no longer fly, but may make wing-assisted jumps up to 30′. She speaks the language of evil dragons and can communicate with intelligent creatures via telepathy.

Concluding the Adventure

If the party slays Tundra, she utters a dying curse: "Know . . . that you have slain . . . a daughter of Fulverm. The curse of my kin . . . upon you. . . ." The DM may decide whether this threat is real or a twisted wyrm's final lie.

Though the PCs find no elephant ivory, they do gain the remains of many dragons. These could be sold to a wizard or kept for magical research. Jenkinson's contract ensures that he has no legal right to anything the PCs find that is not connected with elephants, although he may try to insist otherwise when he finds out about what is really inside the volcano.

Now that the PCs have learned the location of a dragons' graveyard, they might stake out the area. How long will it be before another Progeny of Fulverm nears natural death and comes to the Center-of-the-World for final rest? Ω

THE BANDITS OF BUNGLE-WOOD

BY CHRISTOPHER PERKINS

Short, mean, and out for blood

Artwork by Kevin Ward

Chris writes: "What kobolds lack in size, they make up for with sheer attitude. At least that's the case with the kobolds featured in this scenario. I believe the kobolds' unruly behavior has more than a passing resemblance to the Friday afternoon antics of my high school students, all of whom are my inspiration. To mischievous kobolds everywhere, I dedicate this adventure."

"The Bandits of Bunglewood" is an AD&D® adventure for 4-8 player characters of levels 1-3 (about 12 total levels). This module is especially suitable for cocky PCs who like beating up wimpy little kobolds.

The kobolds encountered here may be small, but they are definitely not weaklings. On the contrary, these kobolds are trained combatants with more than 4 hp each. Although the DM may find *The Complete Book of Humanoids* and the *Complete Fighter's Handbook* useful, they are not required for this adventure.

Dwarves, gnomes, and halflings are especially suitable characters for this module, because larger races will have a difficult time moving about in the kobold lair. But then, there's no reason to deprive human and elven characters of an experience simply because it's unpleasant.

Adventure Background

The story begins with seven kobolds who fled their tribe after failing to steal their chieftain's magical *horn of fog* (a wondrous device that the kobolds took from a druid who was killed by a falling tree while strolling through the woods). To help deter other would-be thieves, the kobold chieftain commanded his tribe to hunt down the seven treacherous kobold bandits. The Drooling Nose tribe chased the exiles to the edge of Bunglewood Forest before the bright sunlight drove them back into the dark heart of the woodland. The kobold escapees stumbled half-blind through the open countryside before happening upon a wounded human fighter named Jekk.

At first, the kobolds thought they could overpower the human. Then they saw the four dead ogres stretched out before them and quickly reconsidered their strategy. They immediately dropped to their knees and started whimpering for mercy. Jekk, still recovering from the ogre ambush, found the kobolds' cowardly display quite amusing.

Luckily, Jekk understood a smattering

of goblinoid languages, including kobold. (He had mutilated many kobolds during his brief adventuring career.) He listened patiently as the kobolds told him that their chieftain wanted them killed for no valid reason whatsoever. Sympathetic to their plight, Jekk agreed to help the seven kobolds get revenge, if they could offer him something of value in return. Although the kobolds were careful not to mention the magical horn, they let it slip that their chieftain also possessed a magical ring that supposedly made its wearer invisible.

Jekk never let on that he was a wanted criminal, and that a *ring of invisibility* was just what he needed to avoid local authorities. He promised to give the seven kobolds hours upon hours of military training, provided they would use their newfound combat skills to attack the Drooling Nose lair and seize their chieftain's magical ring. Jekk might have attacked the lair himself had he not been claustrophobic. (No wonder his adventuring career was short.) Kobold lairs aren't known for their spacious corridors and high ceilings. Knowing that this human could easily kill them, the seven snivelling kobolds quickly accepted Jekk's offer.

Jekk spent six weeks teaching the kobolds various combat tactics and weapon styles. The kobolds were in awe of the human's fighting ability. In fact, by the time their training was complete, each of the kobolds had adopted the name of their mentor. To say this created some confusion would be an understatement. In the end, the kobolds were forced to keep their old names, with the name "Jekk" attached as a prefix.

The Seven Deadly Jekks stormed the lair of the Drooling Nose tribe and massacred their fellow kobolds. After pummeling the heck out of their former chieftain, the kobold renegades cut off the hand with the magical ring on it and gave it to Jekk as a token of their appreciation and gratitude. Jekk discarded the chieftain's hand, slipped the magical ring into his pocket, and slunk off into the woods, never to be seen again. Neither Jekk nor the kobolds realized that the chieftain's "invisibility ring" was actually a *ring of delusion*, and that it conveyed no magical powers whatsoever.

The seven kobold fighters gained a lot of combat experience assaulting the Drooling Nose lair. They also got their magical *horn of fog*. Rather than fight each other for the magical horn, Jekk's runty namesakes agreed to share the item. Since there were seven of them, each kobold would "protect" the horn for one day of the week. Being lawful creatures, the kobolds have so far managed to adhere to this agreement.

After routing the Drooling Nose tribe, the seven Jekks soon found themselves bored and looking for things to do. Romping through the woods and playing war games wasn't much fun any more, so they beat up low-level druids, local wildlife, and even a few solitary huntsmen. After a month of thrashing through the forest, they started to attack travelers on the nearby trade road (using their wondrous *horn of fog* to enshroud the road and cover their escape).

Those who survived a kobold assault found themselves hard-pressed to tell the truth about what happened. "My hired henchmen were killed by kobolds!" is not something one hears every day. Such an admission is more likely to generate laughter than ripples of dread. Hence, the depredations of these seven killer kobolds have been concealed by wild rumors of gnoll raiders, fearsome trolls, evil bugbears, and other respectable monsters. Some merchants actually believe that the trade road is haunted (the sound of the magical horn is thought to be the moaning of angry spirits).

Although no one admits the true nature of the bandits, it's obvious that something from Bunglewood is attacking travelers. With so many conflicting stories, intrepid PCs hoping to dispose of the bandits will hardly know what to expect. PCs hoping to meet something easy (like a troll or an ettin) are in for a surprise. Even if the PCs are victorious, no one's going to give them vast sums of money just because they rid the world of seven measly kobolds.

For the Player Characters

The adventure begins shortly after the PCs arrive in the village of Whitebirch, located just one mile outside Bunglewood, a thick forest. Unless the adventurers prefer to camp by the side of the road, the only rooms in town are available at The Swanmay's Song, a local inn. Shortly after nightfall, a wounded traveler staggers into the inn.

Evelyn Gladner, the friendly innkeeper, prepares a hot cup of tea for the wounded visitor. Meanwhile, Evelyn's two daughters, Agnes and Eleanor, gently dress the man's wounds, which appear to have been inflicted by short swords and daggers. With his wounds tended and his thirst abated, the man (Emril by name) tells his story. Read or paraphrase the following tale to the players:

> "I paid a gentlemen five silvers to travel aboard his wagon, and a comfortable wagon it was. The farmer said he was coming to Whitebirch to visit family. By my good fortune, I noticed he had brought his charming daughter—what a handsome girl, too. I would have been more forthright with the lady had her three brothers not been present. Rather brutish boys they were, but I do not blame them for being so protective. Alas, the only thing I received from the girl was her name, Clarissa.
>
> "While passing through the Bunglewood, our wagon was attacked by cloaked marauders brandishing swords and daggers. Before I could set eyes on the bandits, they were upon us! Clarissa's brothers were handy with pitchforks but no match for the cloaked heathens. From under the wagon, I watched as her brothers and father were stabbed to death. I would have fought the villains myself, had I not seen their terrible ratlike faces peering out through their cowls—and their glowing red eyes! I fled in mortal terror, leaving the screams of the poor girl behind me.
>
> "For a moment, I thought I would never escape, but by some miracle they chose not to pursue me more than a few steps. They seem reluctant to stray from the ambush site and were busily killing the horse and pushing the wagon off the path when I glanced back.
>
> "I have heard stories about creatures more rat than man, who walk on two legs one moment and four legs the next. There was no chance of saving Clarissa. All I could do was come here for sanctuary."

Emril is lying about the ambush. He once saw a wererat in the dark alley of some distant city, but he knows that the Bunglewood bandits were not wererats. The kobolds were indeed cowled (to block out the annoying sunlight), but their race could hardly be mistaken. Emril even heard one of the kobolds (Jekk-Zark) shout, "Behold our kobold

wrath, you farming fatheads!" at the top of his lungs (in Common) during the attack. Emril was stabbed by kobold short swords and daggers before fleeing south on foot .

After overhearing the tale, one of Evelyn's regular patrons, a farmer named Serrin Tequin, steps forward to challenge Emril's story. The DM should read or paraphrase the following before the PCs have the opportunity to ask Emril too many questions:

> "Wererats, you say? I seriously doubt that. Last week I spoke with a traveler who escaped the bandits' clutches, and he saw no such thing. What he met were monstrous beasts with matted hair and pointed ears! Rugrats. No, that's not it. Bugbears! That's it. Five of them, all brandishing spiked clubs!"

Emril's wounds are stab wounds, but without the bruises that might come from bludgeoning weapons like clubs. After Serrin recounts his story, Evelyn's daughter Agnes finds the courage to share her thoughts on the bandits:

> "I don't believe the bandits are wererats or bugbears. I heard the woods are haunted by restless spirits. Do you remember the halfling whistler who visited the inn about three weeks ago? He told us about those huntsmen who lost their way in the woods. A sinister fog surrounded them on all sides, and as they ran blindly between the trees, one of them was struck dead by a ghost."

The halfling whistler whom Agnes mentioned is an inventive young bard with an overactive imagination. But Agnes's story invites her sister Eleanor to tell yet another tale:

> "You should know better than to trust the words of a halfling bard, Agnes. Remember what happened to Godor? About three weeks ago Godor, our blacksmith, went north to purchase some stove piping. He returned that same day, furious because the bandits had ambushed him. He had been heading up the road when he heard a moaning sound coming from the woods. The road became enshrouded by fog, and suddenly sharp claws grabbed him. Good thing Godor was once an adventurer. He used those his keen dwarven senses to escape the bandits. He never saw their faces, but he said they sure smelled bad. He knew from the stench they had to be trolls."

The blacksmith, Godor Irontoes, would never admit that he was assailed and wounded by mere kobolds. He concocted the troll story to justify his injuries. Evidently, Eleanor knows very little about dwarven pride.

Of all the individuals at the inn, only Emril has the statistics of an adventurer. (He's a thief looking for a place to settle.)

Emril: AL N; AC 7; MV 12; T3; hp 4 (12 at full); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (backstab ×2); S 11, D 17, C 10, I 11, W 12, Ch 11; ML 5; XP 65; PP 40%, OL 33%, FT 30%, MS 27%, HS 20%, DN 15%, CW 87%; short sword, dagger. Nonweapon proficiencies: appraising, forgery, tumbling (−4 bonus to armor class if Emril wins initiative and forgoes all attacks).

Emril won't encourage the PCs to hunt down the bandits, because he doesn't want to be exposed as a liar and coward. (Running away from a handful of kobolds is not very honorable.) Evelyn Gladner and the other villagers, however, will plead with the PCs to rid Bunglewood of these notorious bandits "for the good of heart and the good of the community."

Clarissa also has an uncle who lives in Whitebirch. When news of the bandit attack reaches him at his cobbler shop, he closes up for the day and hurries to the inn to plead for someone to rescue his niece. Clarissa's uncle has only his life savings of 25 gp to offer as a reward for his niece's safe return (if the PCs require payment). The people of Whitebirch will rally to his aid by augmenting the reward if necessary (up to 300 gp). Even if the bandits have killed poor Clarissa, the cobbler is desperate to have the girl's body returned for proper burial. PCs who refuse to search for Clarissa will be held in low regard by the otherwise friendly townsfolk.

If pressured to divulge more information about Clarissa's fate, Emril admits that one of the bandits seemed eager to keep her alive. While fleeing the ambush site, Emril heard the kobold say

(in broken Common), "Let pretty girl live! Take her back to cave." Naturally, Emril is reluctant to volunteer such information; the PCs can intimidate him or prey on his sense of guilt.

For the Dungeon Master

The weather will be overcast and rainy for the rest of the adventure. Dark clouds fill the sky an hour after Emril tells his story, and rain periodically drenches the landscape. This does not bother the kobolds, who are quite comfortable with the bleak weather. In fact, they prefer such conditions when using their awesome *horn of fog*.

The seven Jekks are cunning fighters, using their size and training to best advantage. Although they each have the same basic skills, some of the Jekks are higher in level than others. Although they have fought side by side for months, some have managed (through superior ability or luck) to acquire more combat experience. However, the weakest Jekk is still a 1st-level fighter. What the kobolds lack in spellcraft, they make up for with tenacity and gall. Despite their many advancements, however, they are still kobolds. When confronted by opponents of superior power, they will usually flee in fear of their lives.

Two of the Jekks are multi-classed fighter/thieves. For many kobolds, thievery is instinctive. These particular kobolds learned their thieving trade long before stumbling on Jekk, and despite their new lust for combat, they have maintained and honed their rogue abilities.

The party first encounters the kobolds at the ambush site (described below). The overcast sky enables the kobolds to fight without penalty from sunlight. If the ambush does not go well for the kobolds, they retreat to their lair (see "The Kobold Lair") using the *horn of fog* to cover their escape.

The kobolds make their final stand inside their lair, where they have the advantage; all of them receive the close-quarter fighting proficiency (see below) at no cost. They will often use the *horn of fog* to cloud their lair, relying on their close-quarter combat modifier to counter the −2 attack penalty imposed by the blinding fog. (PCs without the blind-fighting proficiency suffer a −4 attack penalty.)

All kobolds possess 60′ infravision. When forced to fight in sunlit conditions, they attack at −1. Gnomes are +1 to hit kobolds.

Ambush Site

The kobold's favorite ambush site is located four miles northwest of Whitebirch, along the trade road to distant Stelwerd. The map of the ambush shows the preferred locations of the kobold bandits (U is Jekk-Urto, I is Jekk-Irki, etc).

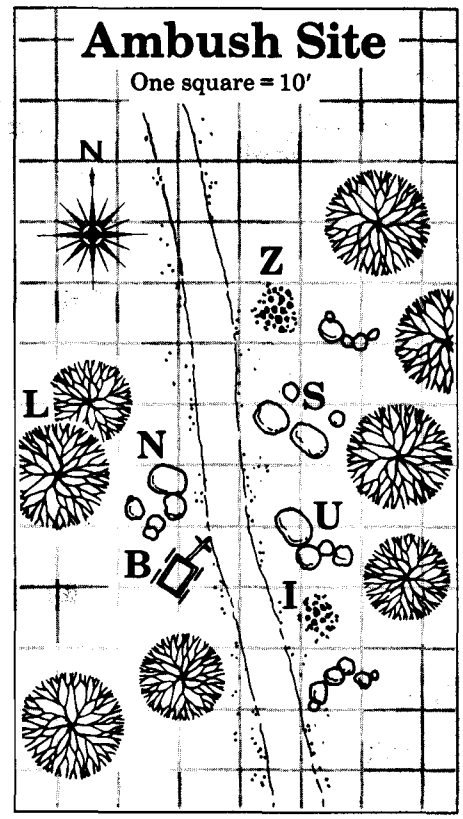
Read or paraphrase the following boxed text when the PCs arrive at this location:

> The road continues unimpeded through the woodlands, flanked on both sides by Bunglewood's tall trees. Clusters of large boulders lie among the weeds and scrub grass, a few of them perfectly sized for a rock-hurling giant. Just west of the road is a blood-stained cart, evidently intact. East of the road someone has piled rocks into two burial cairns. The place is quiet except for the cawing of a lone bird.

The cawing is actually Jekk-Irki's warning to the other kobolds of the party's approach. They attack the party three rounds after the PCs arrive. PCs who dare inspect the bloodstained cart or burial cairns will be attacked immediately.

Before the PCs encounter the "killer kobolds," the DM should decide which kobold possesses the *horn of fog*. The kobolds are not afraid to use this device to obscure the battleground, relying on their blind-fighting abilities and keen senses to give them the edge in battle. The horn is also useful to cover their retreat. They would rather die than surrender this item. The kobolds carry no additional treasure, preferring to keep their wealth hidden in their lair.

- Jekk-Urto, Jekk-Snog, and Jekk-Neglu are hidden behind boulders, waiting to leap out with their swords and daggers. They are the main attack force. Because kobolds are only 3′ high (on average), they can remain concealed even while standing behind the rocks.
- Jekk-Irki and Jekk-Zark are hidden inside the cairns with their short bows ready to fire. They enter and exit these cairns via small, carefully hidden openings and gain the benefit of 90% cover while inside (−10 bonus to armor class). Because of their small size, the kobolds have no trouble moving freely inside these 6′-diameter hollow rock piles.
- Jekk-Blepp uses his thief abilities to hide in shadows under the cart. When not attacking, he's usually clinging to the underside of the wagon, making him 90% undetectable unless someone actually crawls beneath the cart. When the opportunity arises, he sneaks out to backstab an unsuspecting PC.
- Jekk-Liklik hides behind a nearby tree with an arrow nocked to his short bow. Several peep holes have been carved into the old tree, giving this kobold the benefit of 75% cover (−7 to armor class).



The kobolds flee if two of them are killed or three are wounded below half their hit points. They immediately retreat toward their lair (located about five miles northeast) using the thick brush to conceal themselves. PCs who attack kobolds in the woods should suffer penalties to their attack rolls because of the dense foliage. (In any given round, a kobold's armor class drops by 1-4 points from concealment.) The kobolds spread out, hoping to divide would-be pursuers or lure party members into specially prepared woodland traps. (See "Bunglewood Traps, page 51.")

Captured kobolds immediately succumb to their inbred cowardice and beg

for mercy. For the promise of freedom or leniency, they will gladly escort the PCs safely to their lair, avoiding all the traps along the way. The repellent little creatures do possess treasure, but most of it is stashed within their lair.

The Kobold Bandits

Jekk-Urto: AL LE; AC 4; MV 6; F3; hp 20; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 1, 3/2, or 5/2; Dmg by weapon type +1 (Strength), +2 (specialization); S 16, D 16, C 12, I 11, W 9, Ch 14 (7 to nonkobolds); ML 10; XP 120; hide armor, two short swords, dagger.

- Short sword specialization (+1 to hit, +2 damage, extra attack every other round)
- Two-weapon fighting style (three attacks on first round, two attacks the following round with short sword specialization; −2 to attack rolls with secondary weapon)
- Close-quarter fighting proficiency (+2 attack bonus when fighting in cramped conditions)
- Danger sense nonweapon proficiency
- Blind-fighting proficiency (−2 to attack in obscured conditions or when blinded)

Jekk-Urto is the most charismatic of the kobold gang. Although not the formally declared leader, his vote can often sway the kobolds to his way of thinking, although Uboo's poor Wisdom reflects his tendency to support the worst decision for any situation. Jekk-Urto is very stocky and strong for a kobold, and he likes showing off his muscles.

Jekk-Irki: AL LE; AC 5; MV 6; F3; hp 14; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 3/2, 2, or 5/2; Dmg by weapon type +2 (specialization); S 12, D 17, C 12, I 9, W 14, Ch 12 (6 to nonkobolds); ML 9; XP 175; leather armor, short bow (15 arrows), two short swords.

- Short sword specialization (+1 to attack, +2 damage, extra attack every other round)
- Two-weapon fighting style (three attacks on first round, two attacks the following round with short sword specialization; −2 to attack rolls with secondary weapon)
- Close-quarter fighting proficiency (+2 attack bonus when fighting in cramped conditions)
- Blind-fighting proficiency (−2 to attack in obscured conditions or when blinded)
- Animal noise nonweapon proficiency (can imitate birds very well)
- Set snares nonweapon proficiency

Jekk-Irki is the most ambitious and ill-tempered of the kobolds. He constantly tries to dominate the weaker members of the gang, but like most bullies he buckles when threatened or challenged. He loves employing bird calls as a covert method of communication (using his animal noise proficiency), but his fellow kobolds rarely understand what he's trying to communicate.

Jekk-Blepp: AL LE; AC 4; MV 6; F2/T1; hp 10; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1 or 2; Dmg by weapon type (backstab ×2); S 13, D 18, C 11, I 11, W 12, Ch 9 (5 to nonkobolds); ML 9; XP 65; leather armor, sap, short sword, *dagger +1* (taken from the human Jekk).

- PP 52%, OL 42%, FT 29%, MS 40%, HS 40%, DN 22%, CW 62%
- Short sword weapon proficiency
- Two-weapon fighting style (two attacks per round using short sword and dagger; −2 to attack rolls with secondary weapon)
- Close-quarter fighting proficiency (+2 attack bonus when fighting in cramped conditions)
- Blind-fighting proficiency (−2 to attack in zero-visibility conditions)
- Danger sense nonweapon proficiency
- Set snares nonweapon proficiency

Jekk-Blepp considers himself a very lucky kobold. His danger sense has saved his life on many occasions, and he's the only kobold who has something belonging to the human fighter. He stole Jekk's magical dagger, which the arrogant little kobold proudly shows off whenever possible. He is rarely seen without the weapon in hand.

Jekk-Snog: AL LE; AC 6; MV 6; F2; hp 15; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1, 3/2, or 5/2; Dmg by weapon type +2 (specialization); S 15, D 13, C 13, I 6, W 8, Ch 10 (5 to nonkobolds); ML 11; XP 35; hide armor, two short swords, dagger.

- Short sword specialization (+1 to attack, +2 damage, extra attack every other round)
- Two-weapon fighting style (3 attacks on first round, 2 attacks the following round with short sword specialization; −2 to attack rolls with secondary weapon)
- Close-quarter fighting proficiency (+2 to attack rolls when fighting in cramped conditions)
- Blind-fighting proficiency (−2 to attack in obscured conditions or when blinded)

Jekk-Snog is not very bright and spends much of each day picking his nose. The other kobolds like to send him into battle first. Snog is notorious for making called shots. When making a called shot, the kobold has a +1 penalty to initiative and a −4 penalty to attack roll, but he can slice an opponent's weapons belt, disarm a foe wielding a single-handed weapon, or cut the laces of an opponent's leather boot. (The opponent must save vs. paralyzation the following round or trip, automatically losing initiative as well as any shield or Dexterity bonuses for that round.)

Jekk-Zark: AL LE; AC 7; MV 6; F2; hp 11; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1, 3/2, or 2; Dmg by weapon type +2 (specialization); S 11, D 15, C 10, I 11, W 13, Ch 12 (6 to nonkobolds); ML 10; XP 65; leather armor, short sword, short bow (11 arrows).

- Short sword specialization (+1 to attack, +2 damage, extra attack every other round)
- Short bow weapon proficiency
- Close-quarter fighting proficiency (+2 attack bonus when fighting in cramped conditions)
- Blind-fighting proficiency (−2 to attack in zero-visibility conditions)
- Animal noise nonweapon proficiency. (Chittering weasels are a favorite.)

This rude little kobold can speak a few choice insults in Common (picked up from the human fighter). "Eat my sword, bugbear-breath!" and "Your mother was a gas spore!" are his favorites. Unlike many of his fellow kobolds, Jekk-Zark never mastered the lessons of two-weapon combat, giving him penalties of −2 and −4 to hit when attacking with two weapons. However, what he lacks in finesse he makes up for with sheer attitude.

Jekk-Neglu: AL LE; AC 8; MV 6; F1; hp 8; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1 or 2; Dmg by weapon type; S 10, D 12, C 11, I 8, W 12, Ch 10 (5 to nonkobolds); ML 9; XP 15; hide armor, four daggers.

- Dagger weapon proficiency
- Two-weapon fighting style (−2 to attack rolls with secondary weapon)
- Close-quarter fighting proficiency (+2 attack bonus when fighting in cramped conditions)
- Blind-fighting proficiency (−2 to attack in zero-visibility conditions)
- Alertness nonweapon proficiency

Jekk-Neglu prefers the short stabbing blade of a dagger to the longer short sword. Two of his daggers are balanced for throwing, but the kobold has no throwing proficiency (−2 to attack

rolls). Jekk-Neglu is usually first in the line-up whenever the kobolds move through the forest. His alertness makes him difficult to surprise and ambush (+1 bonus to his surprise rolls if his proficiency check succeeds).

Jekk-Liklik: AL LE; AC 5 (3 with style specialization); MV 6; F1/T1; hp 6; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1 or 2; Dmg by weapon type (×2 backstab); S 9, D 17, C 9, I 10, W 10, Ch 11 (6 to nonkobolds); ML 9; XP 35; leather armor, short sword, short bow (12 arrows).

- PP 45%, OL 39%, FT 25%, MS 31%, HS 30%, DN 20%, CW 71%
- Short sword weapon proficiency
- Single-weapon fighting style (+2 bonus to armor class when wielding short sword only)
- Close-quarter fighting (+2 attack bonus when fighting in cramped conditions)
- Blind-fighting (−2 to attack in zero-visibility conditions)
- Set snares nonweapon proficiency

Jekk-Liklik is a cowardly little creature, always staying at the back of a fight with his short bow nocked and ready to fire. He's the only kobold with the single-weapon fighting style. The two-weapon fighting style proved too strenuous and complicated, forcing the human Jekk to give this little kobold one-on-one lessons for using his short sword more defensively.

Bunglewood Traps

The kobolds know the woods quite well. They've staged numerous hunting forays here in an effort to hone their combat skills. Several of the kobolds know how to set snares, so the forest is filled with booby traps rigged to confound would-be prey (not just animals, either).

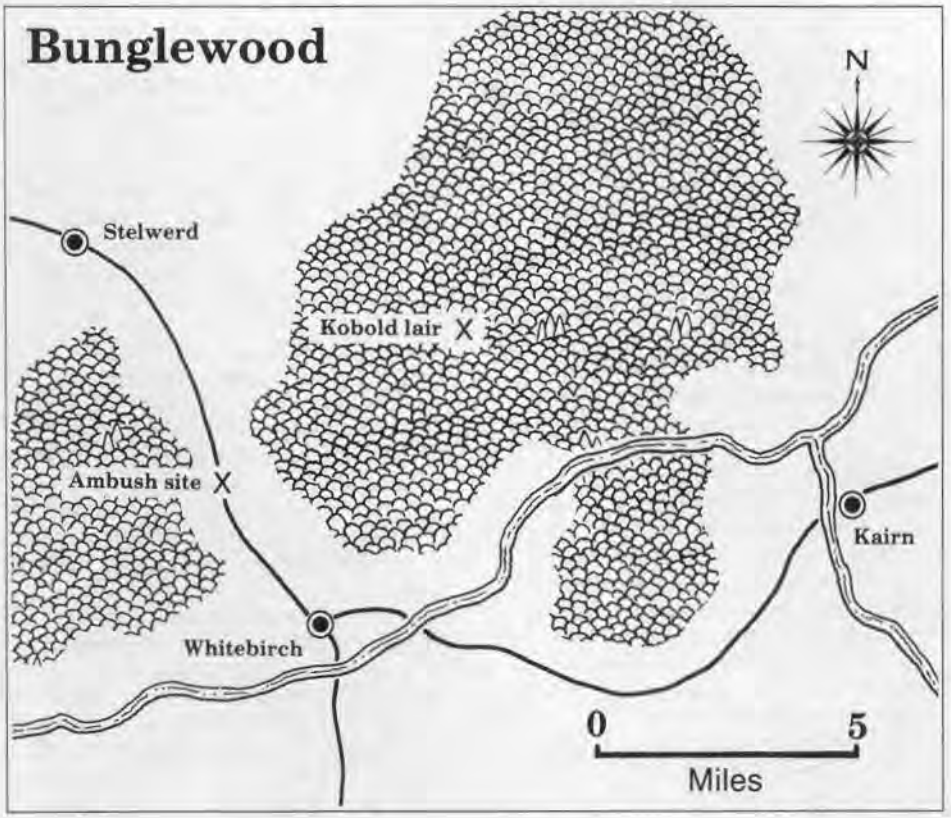
The PCs won't stumble on all the kobolds' traps—Bunglewood is too vast—but there's still a 10% chance per PC per mile traveled that one of these traps will be accidentally triggered unless detected first (with a find-traps roll, careful prodding, or a *detect snares & pits* spell, for example). PCs attempting to track or pursue the kobolds encounter these traps with far more regularity. (The kobolds deliberately travel by the most treacherous routes.) If the PCs are chasing the kobolds, the DM should feel free to use these traps often.

Pitfalls: The kobolds have dug several concealed pits. PCs traveling cautiously through the forest (not running) have a base 2-in-6 chance of detecting these 6'-deep, 5'-wide covered holes. Druids and rangers have a 4-in-6 chance. The pits are lined with fire-hardened wooden spikes; any PC falling into one suffers 1-3 hp falling damage and 1-4 hp per spike. Roll 1d6-1 to determine how many spikes impale the PC.

Trip wires: PCs watching their step have a 1-in-6 chance of spotting these taut ropes (a 3-in-6 chance for rangers and druids). Yanking, pulling, or otherwise disturbing a trip wire triggers one of two possible traps:

- A small, 3'-long log swings down from a nearby tree (THAC0 18), hitting the PC for 1-6 hp damage and stunning him for 1d4+1 rounds.
- A large tied-back branch lashes out (THAC0 17), striking the PC for 1-4 hp damage and temporarily blinding him for 1-4 rounds unless he is wearing a great helm.

Foot-traps: These wooden-toothed bear traps are easily stepped on by running or unwary PCs, but cautious heroes have a 3-in-6 chance of spotting them (5-in-6 chance for druids and rangers). Roughly 25% of these traps, however, are hidden in shallow, concealed foot-holes; such traps are detected as pitfalls. (See above.) The wooden teeth snap shut around an unsuspecting foot, causing an automatic 2-5 hp damage. Prying open a trap requires a successful Strength check; the victim's movement rate is halved until the bear trap is removed.



A Helping Hand

If the PCs stop to rest and heal before continuing their pursuit of the kobolds, they may lose track of the little villains and find themselves wandering aimlessly about the forest. (They don't call it the Bunglewood for nothing.) The seven Jekks have various trap-ridden routes leading to their lair, some more direct than others. The DM should decide when (or whether) the party finds the lair. PCs able to track the kobolds can travel directly to the former home of the Drooling Nose tribe. If the PCs lose track of the kobolds or decide not to chase the small monsters, they can always pick up the trail later.

If the party becomes lost or lacks the means to track the villainous kobolds, the DM may insert the following optional encounter designed to lead the PCs in the right direction.

As you move cautiously through the woods, you see a scrawny, orange-skinned, devilish creature sitting on a log. A small goatee sprouts from his chin, his ears are pointed, and his claws are long and nimble. The creature seems upset about something. He is shaking his head and cursing.

This unusual creature is Erlen Hothands, a forlarren (the offspring of a good nymph and a greater baatezu). He recently killed a low-level druid with his sharp talons and is currently lamenting his evil actions. If approached, Erlen will viciously attack the nearest PC for one round. After this initial outburst, Erlen either flees (if wounded below half his total hit points) or surrenders. In either event, Erlen stops fighting and shows great remorse for his misdeeds, bemoaning his birth, his dark father, and his temper.

If the PCs spare his life, Erlen tries to redeem himself by doing the party one favor. He knows where the kobold lair is located and will gladly lead the PCs there if asked. Although Erlen is willing to join the party, his lack of self-control makes him a constant threat. Roll 1d6 each hour; on a roll of 5-6, Erlen attacks the nearest PC in a fit of rage for 1-4 rounds.

Erlen Hothands (forlarren): INT average; AL NE; AC 2; MV 9; HD 3; hp 16; #AT 2; THAC0 17; Dmg 1-4/1-4; SA heat metal once/day; SZ M (4½' tall); ML 10; XP 120; FF/39. Erlen detests his own existence and cannot control his evil actions, despite much effort. He carries no treasure.

The Kobold Lair

If the PCs pursue the kobolds fleeing the ambush site, they'll eventually stumble upon this lair (assuming they don't get lost in the forest; see "A Helping Hand" above). The entrance to the kobold lair is little more than three small tunnels burrowing into a hillside. Formerly the sanctuary of some 40 kobolds, the lair has since been claimed by the Seven Deadly Jekks.

The kobolds of the Drooling Nose tribe were cannibals. Thus, after securing the lair for themselves, the seven Jekks had no qualms about devouring most of their slain brethren and discarding the gnawed bones. The only creatures they spared were the tribe's scorpions (see areas 5 and 8) and the chieftain's personal pets: a pair of giant killer skunks (no kidding; see area 4).

The kobold lair was formed by water erosion. The tunnels leading into the lair are 4' in diameter, smooth and circular. Most of the caves are 5' high (the only exceptions being areas 4A, 4C, 7, and 8). Large weapons are useless except in the areas noted above. In cramped quarters, PCs fighting with medium-sized weapons have a −2 penalty to their attack rolls, while those using small weapons suffer no attack modifier. All seven kobolds are proficient at close-quarter fighting (see *The Complete Book of Humanoids*, page 93), which gives them a +2 bonus to their attack rolls while inside the lair.

Anyone shorter than 4' tall can navigate the lair unhindered and fight without penalty. PCs who are 4'-4'11" tall find movement difficult and combat awkward; their movement rates are halved, and they suffer a −1 penalty on all attacks (except in areas 4A, 4C, 7, and 8). PCs who are 5'-7' tall move at one-third normal rate and attack at −3 in close quarters. Large-sized PCs (taller than 7') move at one-sixth the usual rate and attack at −5.

None of the kobold caves are illuminated. The kobolds rely on their infravision to move through the passageways. They prefer hit-and-run tactics over long melees and will use their small size and familiarity with the lair to full advantage. If necessary, they can use the *horn of fog* to cloud their escape or further impair their enemies' attacks.

1. Lair Entrances. These three tunnels are used by the kobolds with equal frequency. PCs searching the ground will see several sets of small footprints entering and leaving each tunnel.

Outside area 1A are two piles of gnawed bones, the remains of the Drooling Nose tribe. Discarded among the bones are several pieces of clothing and leather, as well as worthless personal items (small pouches made of animal skins, bone necklaces, tiny whistles carved out of wood, small wooden shields, bone daggers, etc.). Mingled among the kobold bones are the remains of several small forest animals snared and devoured by the seven Jekks over the last several weeks.

All three entrances to the kobold lair are trapped with camouflaged trip wires. PCs searching the ground for traps have a 20% chance of spotting a concealed wire; thieves may add their find-traps percentage to this score. All trip wires and traps can be removed by a thief with normal chances of success.

Tugging or snapping the trip wire at area 1A discharges a crossbow bolt (THAC0 19; Dmg 1-4) fired from a light crossbow hidden at the bend in the tunnel. The crossbow can be easily dislodged and used by the PCs, although there's only the one bolt.

Tripping the wire at area 1B releases a small spear (THAC0 19; Dmg 2-5) hidden in the nearby tunnel wall. The spear is a small-sized weapon of kobold construction that the PCs can use once it has discharged or been safely removed.

If the trip wire in area 1C is yanked or cut, a wooden portcullis drops from the ceiling 10' inside the tunnel and seals off this entrance. The portcullis can withstand 20 hp damage, or it can be forcefully raised by making a successful lift-gates roll at +35%. Anyone beneath the portcullis when it falls suffers 1-6 hp damage and is pinned. A *knock* spell will not raise the fallen gate, nor can a *hold portal* spell be used to keep the concealed portcullis from dropping.

2. Narrow Tunnel. This winding tunnel descends from the northern cave entrance (area 1A) to area 4B. Near the tunnel's halfway point are two 4'-wide, 5'-deep recesses. The kobolds like to use these alcoves as hiding places from which to ambush intruders. If four or more Jekks are present in the lair, at least one of them will be stationed here (two are here if six or more of the Jekks are present).

3. Common Quarters. The seven Jekks usually sleep in this 5'-high cave. The kobolds are noisy sleepers (especially Jekk-Snog, who snores like a hill giant), but they are also sensitive to disturbances atypical of the woods (sounds of clinking armor, approaching torches, faint whispering, etc). Kobolds who detect the approach of intruders immediately retreat to area 4B or 4C.

The cave is littered with debris, excrement, rat bones, and rags. Placed in niches along the walls are the skulls of various creatures killed by the seven proud kobold hunters: a centaur, a worg, a giant weasel, a wild boar, and an ogre. The cave contains nothing else of interest or value.

4. Nexus Cavern. Read the following boxed text if the party approaches from the western tunnel (area 1B):

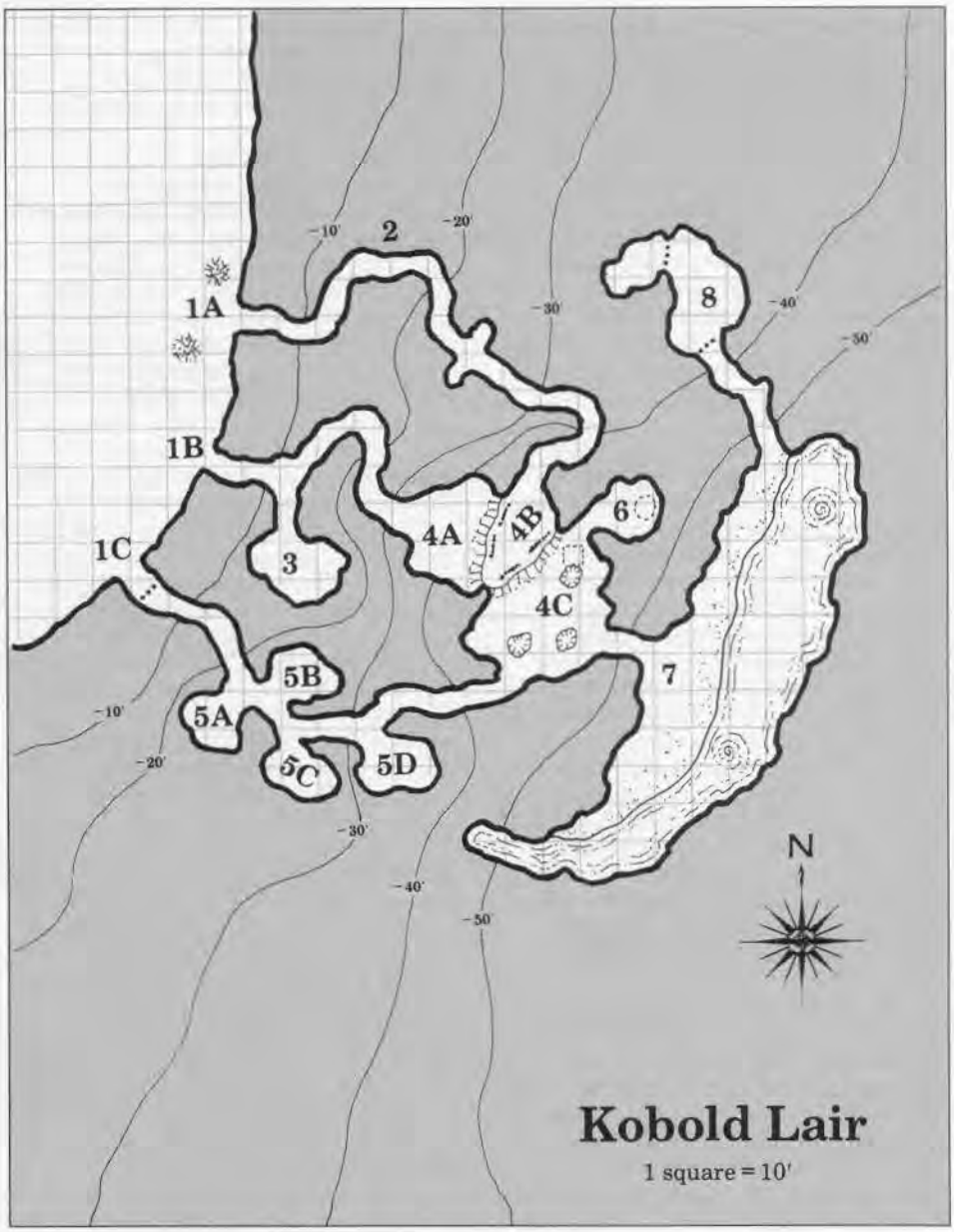
> Beyond the cramped confines of the tunnel you see a higher, more spacious cavern. Twenty feet away, a natural 7′-high plateau spans the entire cave width. Built atop this plateau are two walls of piled rocks, each no higher than 3′. Several small shapes, vigilant and ready for intruders, are barely visible behind these barriers.

If the party approaches from the north tunnel (area 2):

> Beyond the cramped confines of the winding tunnel is a natural plateau overlooking a spacious cavern. Atop this plateau are two pairs of rock blinds—3′-high walls made of piled rocks. Two of the walls guard the western portion of the cavern, while two others overlook the cavern's larger southeast section. Protected behind these rock blinds are several small, foul-smelling creatures equipped with spears.

If the party approaches from the southwest (area 5):

> The tunnel opens into a spacious cavern. Three large stalagmites rise from the middle of the floor to a height of 9′ or more. Atop a 7′-high ledge to the north, someone has built two rock blinds, 3′-high walls of piled rocks. You see small shapes lurking behind these barriers.



This large cavern is the nexus of the kobold lair. This is where the remaining Jekks make their final stand before fleeing up the chimney in area 6. The ceiling is 12′ high in areas 4A and 4C; however, the cavern's "plateau" (area 4B) is 7′ higher than the ground on either side, so the ceiling above area 4B is only 5′ high (a perfect height for the kobold defenders).

Most of the kobolds like hiding behind the rock walls of area 4B, but some prefer to conceal themselves behind the sturdy stalagmites of area 4C (especially if the PCs are heard approaching the cave from area 5, via the southwest tunnel).

Although it is possible to cross the cavern by scaling the central plateau, long-lost water carved a natural tunnel under the ridge, joining area 4A directly to area 4C. The tunnel is barely wide enough to wield a dagger in effectively. The kobolds can travel through the tunnel (and defend themselves within the tunnel) without any difficulty.

Built atop the central plateau are four archery blinds made of piled rocks (two facing area 4A, two facing area 4C). These 3′-high walls provide the kobolds with 75% cover (−7 bonus to armor class), ideal for the kobold archers employing their short bows. In addition to the living, breathing kobolds hiding behind these rock blinds, several slain kobolds (from the former Drooling Nose tribe) have been propped along the walls to draw enemy fire. Two decoys stand behind each wall; attacking PCs must approach within 10′ to realize that these kobolds are actually dead. If the optional infravision rules are in use, PCs relying on infravision will not see the kobold decoys because they radiate no discernable heat.

Hidden behind the rock blinds are three loaded light crossbows and 10 small throwing spears (Dmg 2-5) for emergency use. The seven Jekks are not proficient with such weapons and have a −2 penalty to attack rolls when wielding them.

When the PCs arrive in this area, the kobolds immediately release the two giant killer skunks in their custody. Sitting on the floor in area 4C (near the northernmost stalagmite) is a 5′ × 5′ × 5′ wooden cage draped with a large leather cover that is caked with dried mud. The mud works surprisingly well at camouflaging the cage as natural stone. A system of ropes and pulleys (painted to blend in with the background) enables one or more kobolds to hoist the cage off the ground, releasing the giant skunks trapped underneath. (A Strength of 14 is required to lift the cage.) The giant skunks are starving and will attack just about anything, including careless kobolds. The animals were trained by the former kobold chieftain and are more ill-tempered and ferocious than the usual breed. Unlike most humanoid species, the kobolds do not find the skunks' musk nauseating and suffer no ill effects because of it.

The giant skunks will not climb onto the central plateau (where most of the kobolds hide), but they can crawl through the tunnel that burrows underneath the plateau. They are unimpeded by the narrow tunnels that lead to the surface.

Giant skunks (2): INT animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 9; HD 5; hp 18 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SA/SD squirt musk (save at −4 or begin retching; lose 50% of Strength and Dexterity for 1-4 rounds); SZ M (6′ long); ML 12; XP 270; MC1.

5. Warrior Caves. These four caves were once occupied by the tribe's kobold warriors and their mates. The caves have remained abandoned ever since the Seven Deadly Jekks took over the lair (except when a rust monster stumbled in and the seven Jekks were forced to scare it away with wooden spears). Each cave holds several small piles of leaves, sticks, and other refuse (kobold beds).

Bound and gagged in area 5A is Clarissa Farley, the young girl who was recently kidnapped by the kobolds. Jekk-Urto thought Clarissa was "pretty," so against the other kobold's better judgments he ordered her taken alive. The kobolds have been offering her scraps of food, but she's utterly terrified of them and hasn't eaten a thing. She screams loudly whenever her gag is removed.

Clarissa Farley: AL LG; AC 10; MV 12; 0 level; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 7; XP 500 (for her rescue only); unarmed.

Clarissa is rather clumsy with weapons and suffers a −5 attack penalty. She is unreliable in combat and has an uncanny knack for placing herself in great peril.

Lying on the dirt floor of area 5B is a corked bottle filled with a thin burgundy-colored liquid. The bottle sits atop a large concealed mousetrap. Touching or removing the bottle releases the trap's catch, causing 1-4 hp damage. PCs aware of the buried trap are entitled to a Dexterity check to avoid damage. The liquid inside the bottle is actually kobold blood.

Area 5C is an empty lair.

In the middle of area 5D lies a 6′-square mat of sewn animal hides. If the PCs investigate, they see something writhing underneath. Beneath the mat are the skeletal remains of the kobold chieftain. The chieftain wears the tattered remnants of studded leather armor and is missing his left hand (which was cut off and given to the human fighter Jekk, along with the chieftain's magical ring). Crawling inside the chieftain's rib cage and clinging to the underside of the leather mat are 15 nasty scorpions. From 1-6 of these creatures attack the party in any round.

Scorpions (15): INT non; AL N; AC 8; MV 4; HD 1 hp; THAC0 20; #AT 1 (stinger); Dmg 1; SA poison (save at +4 or become seriously ill for 1-6 days; attacks, saving throws and ability checks are made at −4); SZ T; ML 8; XP 15; New monster. The scorpions inflict no damage with their tiny claws, using these only to grasp prey.

6. Chieftain's Cave. This small cave contains little of interest. A heap of refuse piled against the north wall was once the kobold chieftain's bed. There are no items of value hidden within the pile; it has already been thoroughly searched by the seven Jekks.

In the ceiling near the east wall, a 3′-diameter, roughly hewn chimney twists up almost 50′ to the hilltop above, where a mat of grass and leaves hides the shaft. A narrow, 5′-high wooden ladder leans against the wall at the bottom of the shaft to assist any kobolds who wish to use this chimney as an escape route. The interior of the vertical shaft is riddled with handholds, making the 50′ climb (or descent) a safe one. If the battle in area 4 goes badly for the kobolds, they will retreat to this cave and escape up the narrow shaft.

7. Water Cavern.

A short, descending tunnel leads to this huge, water-filled cavern. Only the western rim remains above water, yet it is layered with sand and silt. The stagnant water that fills the eastern portion of the cavern occasionally ripples as drops of groundwater fall from the foot-long stalactites that cling to the 12′-high ceiling.

If the party's exploration of the kobold lair has been too easy, the DM can place 3-18 small piercers in this cavern. The piercers cling to the ceiling above the western portion of the room, since that part is the most frequently traveled. Many careless kobolds have died trying to dodge the plummeting piercers. The battle-hungry Jekks, however, occasionally provoke and kill the stony gastropods, tossing their shells into the 10′-deep water.

Kobold footprints litter the sandy floor, some heading north to area 8 (where the Jekks keep their treasure) and the rest heading back to area 4. If this cavern contains piercers, the kobold tracks are very close to the western wall; the Jekks are cautious to the point of paranoia when it comes to crossing this cavern. So far, none of them have been hurt.

Piercers (3-18): INT non; AL N; AC 3; MV 1; HD 1; hp 4 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SA surprise; SZ T (1′ long); ML 9; XP 35; MM/290.

8. Treasure Cave. The 6′-high, roughly hewn tunnel that leads to this 8′-high cave has been chiseled into an uneven staircase. The cave entrance is blocked by a heavy wooden portcullis. A second portcullis, hidden behind a piece of camouflaged leather, seals off an unlit alcove in the northwest corner of the cave.

The two working portculli are fastened together by a series of hidden ropes, pulleys, and other kobold mechanisms. If one portcullis is raised (requiring a lift-gates roll at +50%), the other automatically lifts up as well. This trap, intended to protect the kobold treasure, is quite insidious, since opening the northern portcullis releases a huge scorpion trapped within the alcove. Because the northern portcullis is concealed, the PCs may not realize what they've done until the scorpion is unleashed.

Huge scorpion: INT non; AL N; AC 4; MV 12; HD 4 + 4; hp 22; THAC0 15;

#AT 3; Dmg 1-8/1-8/1-3; SA poison sting (death/0; onset time immediate); SZ M (4′ long); ML 13 (10 when fed); XP 420; MM/309.

Luckily, there is a way to circumvent the portcullis trap. The party can simply cut a hole through the southern portcullis (by sawing away one or more of the wooden bars), thereby entering the cave without lifting the gate. A *warp wood* spell is also effective. PCs who can magically adjust their size (using a *reduce* spell, *wand of size alteration,* or potion of *diminution*) can likewise avoid the trap. The mechanisms that link the two portculli can be detected and dismantled only from within the cave (by a thief using the find/remove traps ability).

Kobolds are small and thin enough to squeeze through the portcullis bars without much trouble. Most PC races, including gnomes and halflings, are too large to attempt the same feat. The huge scorpion cannot fit through the bars.

Stacked against the east wall of the 8′-high cave are the following treasures (many of which are valuable only to kobolds):

- An unlocked wooden chest (2′ × 1½′ × 1½′) containing 281 sp, 95 gp, four wax candles (three with bite marks), a silver candlestick (15 gp), a small mirror, a jar of ink (8 gp), a wooden flute (1 gp), a silver holy symbol (faith determined by DM; worth 24 gp), five gold jingle bells (10 gp each) sewn to a leather strap, three empty bottles, and a book (written in Common) titled *Which Way Is Up: A Spelunker's Guide to Caves* (5 gp).
- An unlocked wooden coffer containing 21 ornamental and semi-precious stones: two white-banded agates (5 gp), two blue azurites (10 gp), six green malachites (15 gp), three fire agates (25 gp), a carnelian (50 gp), four golden citrines (50 gp), and three shiny serpentines (75 gp).
- A battered suit of human-sized chain mail, under which lies a shiny *footman's mace +2* and a nonmagical metal shield. These items were taken from the corpse of a wandering priest whom the kobolds ambushed.
- A large leather sack containing 632 cp, 10 daggers, five human and dwarf-sized helmets, a poorly treated wizard's spell book (with 1-10 legible spells of levels one and two), six wooden scroll tubes (empty), a pair of dwarven boots with silver-plated bootheels (scuffed; worth 2 gp apiece), and an opened keg of honey (too sweet for the kobolds).
- A small wooden crate (2′ × 2′ × 2′) containing 48 pieces of copper dinnerware. (Each piece is worth 1-4 gp, or 150 gp for the set.) The seven Jekks like the way the crate's contents clatter together, but they have no idea what the circular copper disks (plates) are used for. Stamped on the crate is the insignia of its owner, a slain merchant from Stelwerd.
- Six poorly handled bales of silk (2 gp each). Inside one is hidden a *wand of metal and mineral detection* (32 charges).
- A covered wooden bucket containing a set of thieves' picks, 12 black and yellow striped darts (three of which are actually *darts of homing*), and six live scorpions. (See area 5 for statistics.)

Concluding the Adventure

Clarissa Farley, the young girl captured by the kobolds, has nothing to offer her rescuers except her father's land, a few square acres north of Stelwerd. With her father and brothers slain, she has little choice but to stay with her uncle in Whitebirch. In addition to his life savings of 25 gp, Clarissa's uncle is even willing to give each PC free footwear for saving his niece's life.

The people of Whitebirch will be hard-pressed to believe that the dreaded Bandits of Bunglewood were nothing more than kobolds. Clarissa will lend credence to the party's story, as will the wounded thief Emril (but only if he's pressured). Godor Irontoes, the local dwarven blacksmith, still insists he was attacked by trolls.

Killing or capturing all seven Jekks is a difficult task, especially given the kobolds' tendency to retreat. Kobolds who are driven from their lair will eventually return, hoping to claim any treasures left behind. If the majority of the "killer kobolds" survive, they will undoubtedly resurface to plague the region by attacking stray hunters, lone travelers, and lost ogres—if they don't kill each other arguing over whose idea it was to ambush the party in the first place. Ω

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THE LAST OASIS

BY PETER ÅBERG

Next stop: the Borderland

Artwork by Karl Waller

Peter writes: *"Most of the adventures I submit have been playtested by my old (and in some cases graying) gaming group in Sweden. We still get together three or four times each year, whenever I'm in town for a visit. I'd like to thank the 'Dragon's Den' gang for helping me debug this one, and special thanks also to TSR's playtesters for additional comments and feedback."*

"The Last Oasis" is an AD&D® AL-QADIM® adventure for 4-6 player characters of levels 1-4 (about 12 total levels). The group should include several sturdy fighters and at least one priest or wizard. The party should own at least one weapon of +1 or greater enchantment. This adventure is set in the world of Zakhara but could easily be adapted for play in any desert setting. It can be used either as a stand-alone adventure or as part of an ongoing AL-QADIM campaign.

The DM should carefully read through the full adventure prior to play. Familiarity with the personalities and motivations of the major NPCs is essential. A copy of MC13, the AL-QADIM appendix to the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®*, would be helpful but is not required. A copy of *Arabian Adventures* (*AA*) is required to make full use of the setting.

"A curse on you and your families! May you be struck with the evil eye and slighted by the hand of Fate, you sons of camel dung! I shall not rest until I see you punished! Do you hear? I shall not rest!"

Latifa al-Djemel continued shouting her curses long after the men who had stolen her camels and provisions were out of sight beyond distant sand dunes. On the ground around her lay her guards, dead or dying under the intense heat of the desert sun. When her voice finally had grown hoarse from yelling, she slowly sank to her knees, angrily sobbing to herself, "I shall not rest. I shall not rest."

Latifa al-Djemel was heading for the city of Qudra in northwestern Zakhara when she met her fate near the southern foothills of the Furrowed Mountains. Many others following the caravan route between Qudra and the nearby city of Hiyal have similarly perished over the past few months, ever since a mysterious band of desert bandits began preying on travelers along the route. These bandits are bolder than

any ever heard of before, and they are much better organized. They have even launched large-scale attacks against relatively well-protected caravans.

The emir of Qudra has sent out troops to search for the bandits, but to no avail. The desert is vast and the bandits are extremely mobile. According to rumors, the bandits have a main camp somewhere in the Haunted Lands, not far from the small town of Adhal by the Sea of Caravans. If these rumors are true, the camp must be very well hidden, for nothing has been found of it—or at least no one has ever returned to report its whereabouts.

The increased number of attacks against caravans has caused a great deal of alarm among the merchants of Qudra. Trade with southern Zakhara has been disrupted. Many merchants are hiring skilled mercenaries and reputable adventurers to serve as guards accompanying their shipments, paying handsomely for these services. The emir of Qudra has offered a generous reward of 5,000 gp to anyone who successfully puts an end to the bandits' attacks, or who delivers accurate information on the location of the bandits' secret camp.

For the Dungeon Master

The adventure the PCs are about to embark on begins in the city of Qudra but will soon take them into the realm of legends and lore of the northern desert nomads—the Al-Badia. There they will enter a world of secrets and wonders long forgotten by city dwellers (the Al-Hadhar) . . . a world where opposing concepts such as life and death, good and evil, and night and day are never clearly defined.

At the core of what the PCs will experience is something the Al-Badia refer to as the *hama-walk* (or spirit-walk). According to desert lore, when a man is near death, particularly a death under slow or agonizing circumstances, his spirit is sometimes released before the body is fully dead, so that it may escape the last moments of suffering. The clerics and hakimas (wise women) of the desert claim that a spirit thus freed cannot assume true hama-form (spirit-bird form) and fly away to the afterlife as it normally would. (See page 65 or the description of the hama in MC13.) Instead, it retains its human form and is bound to stay within the borderland between life and death until the body finally dies.

Some say this Borderland is a pocket of the demi-plane of Shadow. It is described as a vast desert strewn with artifacts from ancient, long dead civilizations. Its inhabitants are those who await their release from the world of the living, or who choose to stay there due to unfinished tasks, evil magic, the evil eye, or Fate. Many undead are also drawn to the place, using it to move between locations in the outside world where there are particularly strong connections to the Borderland, such as cemeteries.

Fortunately, the Borderland is not all deathly gloom, for at its center lies a beautiful paradise: an oasis with lush vegetation, an abundance of fragrant and colorful flowers, and hundreds of exotic birds perched in fruit-laden trees singing soothing songs. The oasis is considered a resting place for the spirit before it continues its journey onward. Accordingly, it is called the Last Oasis.

Those few who have been to the Last Oasis and later managed to return to life describe it as a wondrous garden inhabited by a curious trio: a wise old caretaker, a guardian who once was a soldier in some long-forgotten army, and a hakima who oversees the onward journey of the spirits.

To city dwellers, stories such as those of the Last Oasis sound incredible, easily dismissed as mere fantasies spun by superstitious desert nomads—colorful but untrue. The PCs will soon have an opportunity to discover otherwise as they set out on their journey toward the Last Oasis.

The City of Qudra

The adventure begins with the PCs in the city of Qudra. They may have come to the city after hearing rumors about adventure and the reward being offered by the emir, or they might be passing through on their way somewhere else.

With its massive gray walls and impressive fortifications, the city of Qudra sits as the last outpost of the Enlightened Throne on the eastern shore of the Great Sea, an eternal sentinel standing watch against the barbarians of the North and the pirates of the Corsair Domains.

Qudra is run very much like a military camp by its emir, a dwarf named Hatit Abd al-Wajib, a mamluk of the Dutiful. The city's soldiers are well trained and disciplined (being mainly mamluks), its ruler and his council are just but firm, and its laws and punishments are equally enforced on everyone regardless of station.

At times of peace, Qudra enjoys limited but prosperous trade with the distant barbarian kingdoms. Jewelry, fine silk, and rare spices are traded for salt, wood, metals such as bronze and silver, and exotic furs and animals. Many of these items are shipped through Qudra by caravans to markets in the cities of the interior of Zakhara, where they fetch a high price. The largest such caravans rival the size of the great caravans carrying weapons from the forges of the city of Hiyal to Qudra each year. Most are much smaller, however, consisting of no more than 20 to 30 camels.

The eastern caravan route to Hiyal is by far the most traveled of all routes leaving Qudra. It is not susceptible to the stormy winds that often plague ships crossing the Sea of Caravans, and it is considered relatively safe—or at least it was, until the recent wave of attacks by the desert bandits.

The DM is free to insert city encounters as desired while the PCs are in Qudra. A few suggestions for rumors the PCs might hear from NPCs in Qudra are listed below. The PCs should also learn the information detailed in the "Introduction."

- In a few weeks, a caravan carrying an assortment of exotic and expensive goods from the north will leave Qudra for Hiyal. (True)
- The sultana Alurah bint Asrah of Hiyal controls the desert bandits. She wants to see the merchants of Qudra ruined. (False)
- Desert bandits have managed to infiltrate some of the caravanserais to learn the exact routes taken by caravans as well as the cargo they carry. (True)
- Several caravans have disappeared without a trace on their way to or from Hiyal. (True, but corpses disappear quickly in the desert)
- "The Whispering Doom" that Mad Asham (a local character) keeps talking about is what really lies behind the disappearance of several caravans. (False)
- The merchant Latifa al-Djemel, friend of Shams al-Ezai (a local character who oversees the slave market), has not been seen or heard of since she and

her men left Hiyal several weeks ago. (True)

Latifa al-Djemel was a merchant well known in Qudra for her pleasant manners and honesty in business dealings. Her presumed death is mourned by many.

If the PCs inquire where to hire on as caravan guards, they are referred to the main caravanserai, located near the city gates. Certain wealthy merchants (among them Diyab al-Hiyali, see below) have hired criers who walk through the markets of the city calling for brave warriors to come to the caravanserai if they seek employment.

At the Caravanserai

Most merchants seeking to hire guards possess only small caravans carrying mundane cargo (wood, common furs, etc.) and cannot afford to pay much. After the PCs have looked around for a while, the only prospective employer they should find interesting is Diyab al-Hiyali, a wealthy salt merchant.

Diyab al-Hiyali: AL CG; AC 10; MV 12; T11 (merchant-rogue); hp 38; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 9, D 9, C 9, I 10, W 16, Ch 16; ML 15; jambiya. Proficiencies: appraising, bureaucracy (see *AA*, page 72), etiquette, forgery, haggling (*AA*, page 75), reading/writing.

Diyab is a rather fat man in his late sixties, with white hair and a neatly trimmed white goatee. He has a round face with many wrinkles and bright, cheerful eyes that give him a kindly look. He wears a finely embroidered white dolman set with dozens of small pearls. On his head sits a magnificent white turban with a large, clear gemstone set in a gold broach on its front.

Diyab is a shrewd and very successful businessman with a taste for adventure. He has been in the caravan trade for more than 40 years, starting out as a lowly camel handler. Unfortunately, a recent bit of bad judgment on his part concerning a failed venture into overseas shipping placed him deeply in debt with powerful and unscrupulous lenders in Hiyal. He now needs to get 10,000 gp in diamonds to Hiyal as soon as possible to avoid being visited by hired thugs for defaulting on his debts. Diyab plans to secretly send this treasure with his regular salt caravan and is in a hurry to get it assembled. To avoid attracting undue attention, he is adding only a few additional guards to the caravan, but he wants these guards to be very good at their job.

Umar (henchman of Diyab): AL N; AC 7; MV 12; F5 (desert rider); hp 45; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 18/07, D 13, C 17, I 9, W 12, Ch 16; ML 16; studded leather armor, long sword, light lance, short bow. Proficiencies: animal handling, awareness (*AA*, page 71), endurance, riding/camel specialization (*AA*, page 77), survival (desert).

Umar is a powerful man, heavily muscled and tall, with a narrow clean-shaven face bearing numerous battle scars. His dark eyes are framed by black bushy eyebrows. His gaze is stern and his voice commanding. He is dressed in a plain black aba (the traditional desert robe) without adornments and wears a keffiyeh (a head cloth) with an agal (to hold the keffiyeh in place) on his head.

Umar has been Diyab's loyal employee for over seven years, rising in rank during that time to become the merchant's most trusted and experienced caravan leader.

Umar fears nothing but the wrath of Fate. Many times his life has been saved due to her grace. Perhaps as a result of this, he is always concerned about unintentionally slighting her. He is extremely superstitious, following all kinds of rules of behavior that he has either learned from others or made up himself. (A few examples are given in the text; the DM is encouraged to add more.) He tries to force these rituals on others, particularly if he is required to put his life at risk in their company. His insistence on the proper methods of propitiating Fate is certain to cause tension with the PCs if they refuse to cooperate.

Job Interviews

When the PCs arrive at the caravanserai, Umar sits behind a table interviewing people from a long line of job applicants. The line moves at a slow but steady pace. Diyab sits quietly at a small desk behind Umar, busily writing letters to send with the caravan. Occasionally Umar leans over to ask a question of Diyab, who responds with only a shake or nod of his head.

Diyab would like to find a coordinated group of fighters as guards. A group with a sorcerer or priest would be even better. So far, however, the applicants he has seen have been only poorly qualified ex-soldiers or unskilled commoners.

When it is the PCs' turn to be interviewed, Umar tersely asks them about their qualifications, their references, and their reasons for wanting to hire on as caravan guards. If the PCs make a good impression—extolling their experience and virtues while not obviously overdoing it—Umar leans over to whisper something to Diyab. After looking the PCs over from head to toe, Diyab stands up and exclaims with a smile that they are exactly the persons he is looking for.

Diyab offers the PCs the incredibly generous amount of 200 gp per person to accompany his caravan to Hiyal and back. Actually, this compensation is negotiable, and he could go as high as 500 gp per person depending on how experienced the PCs are. If the PCs accept, Diyab promises to supply them with mounts and enough provisions to last the trip, plus one quarter of their pay now. The rest is payable on their return to Qudra, by which time he hopes to have arranged to borrow some more money. (He does not mention this embarrassing circumstance to the PCs.)

The caravan is scheduled to depart later that same afternoon. Until then, the PCs are free to buy provisions of their own and make any preparations they deem necessary. Umar asks the PCs to meet him at the Blue Mosque (Open Mosque) in the city, where he plans to introduce them to the caravan drivers so they all can pray together for a successful journey. He also warns them not to bring any alcoholic beverages on the trip.

Departure from Qudra

At the mosque, the PCs are introduced to Ahmed bin Khalid, acting as Umar's lieutenant, and the six caravan drivers who will be accompanying them on the journey. All are experienced hands who have been in Diyab's employment for at least a year.

Ahmed bin Khalid: AL CE; AC 7; MV 12; T3 (matrud); hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16, D 17, C 13, I 10, W 9, Ch 15; ML 9; XP 120; scimitar, four throwing daggers. Thief skills: PP 50%, OL 45%, FT 5%, MS 55%, HS 25% DN 15%, CW 90%, RL −10%. Proficiencies: begging (see *AA*, page 71), gaming, reading lips, riding (land-based), survival (desert).

Ahmed is a rather short, muscular

man with a handsome square-jawed face, clear blue eyes, and jet black hair. He is ambitious, always seeking to make friends with anyone in a position of power or who otherwise impresses him; this might include the PCs.

Ahmed's simple clothes reflect his meager income, but that is a situation he hopes to remedy soon. He is Al-Badia, a native of the desert, and is secretly working for the desert bandits. As part of his initiation into the bandits' ways, he betrayed several caravans and took part in attacking many others, among them that of Latifa al-Djemel.

During the first leg of the upcoming journey, Ahmed tries to learn more about the PCs: who they are, what their skills are, and how good they are at them. He realizes the wisdom of knowing as much as he can about his enemies.

The other caravan drivers are all 1st-level warriors. The DM may develop their personalities as desired.

Caravan drivers (6): AL LG; AC 10; MV 12; F1; hp 6 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (long sword or light lance); ML 11.

After prayers at the mosque, Umar leads the group back to the caravanserai, where the caravan is ready to leave. It consists of 40 camels loaded with leather bags containing salt crystals and provisions. A few bags on four different camels also contain small diamonds mixed in with the salt. The diamonds and salt crystals appear almost identical, making the diamonds very difficult to find in all but a very thorough inspection. Only Diyab and Umar know which bags contain the diamonds.

Before Umar permits the PCs to mount their camels, he insists each person first offer the beast some salt in order to bond with it. He also demonstrates the short prayer that should be said before mounting up, and shows how a few grains of salt should be thrown over each shoulder to ward off evil spirits trying to cling to one's back. The other caravan drivers seem to be well aware of these rituals and need no coaxing by Umar.

As a last act before setting off, Umar prostrates himself (facing Huzuz, of course) and offers a final prayer for protection and success in their mission. Despite his precautions, Fate has turned against him.

Into the Desert

The route Umar follows first takes the caravan to the town of Adhal by the Sea of Caravans, arriving there by the end of the second day. The markets and caravanserais of Adhal offer a last chance to buy provisions or replace sickly animals before continuing on to Hiyal.

Umar takes the opportunity to visit the mosque in Adhal. He encourages the PCs to drink their fill of water from the well in Adhal and suggests that each of them should place a rag soaked in the water inside a leather pouch, to be carried on their journey as a gesture symbolizing their ties to this place and their intent to return to it.

On the following day, the journey continues along a fairly straight line toward Hiyal. Most attacks by the desert bandits have occurred within three days' ride of Adhal, near the southwestern extension of the Furrowed Mountains. To save water and make the journey more bearable, the caravan is on the move from very early in the morning (around 4 A.M.) until 10 A.M., and then from 4 P.M. until 10 P.M.

The DM may insert minor encounters such as desert animals and perhaps even a large scorpion or two during this part of the trip.

Sandstorm

Refer to page 82 in the *Arabian Adventures* book for more details about sandstorms and their effects.

> Shortly after daybreak on the third day of travel after leaving Adhal, Umar suddenly stops the caravan. A sandstorm is rapidly approaching in the distance. There is no time to seek shelter. Umar orders everyone to dismount and gather the camels in a close group. You barely have time to follow his orders before the first gusts of wind begin to lash at you.
>
> Umar yells for everyone to lie down and cover their faces with cloth. Soon the full fury of the storm is upon you. The wind tears at your clothing, and sand penetrates everything. Breathing becomes increasingly difficult.
>
> The storm grows stronger and more violent with each passing minute. You can feel sand piling up on top of you, slowly burying you alive.
>
> One of the caravan drivers is overcome by fear and panics, rushing out into the whirling sand, screaming at the top of his lungs. Through the howling wind you hear Umar's voice nearby, yelling for the man to come back, "Ahmed! Ahmed! You'll find nothing but death out there. Come back!" But Ahmed is gone before you can react.

The PCs have every reason to be very worried. The DM should let them consider actions they might take to survive, keeping in mind that speech between the PCs is difficult due to the noise of the wind and the great amount of sand flying through the air. Anyone not lying prone on the ground covering his face suffers 1-2 hp damage per round. Spellcasting is impossible.

Just when it seems the PCs might not survive at all, the storm abates.

> After what seems like hours of torture, you can feel the winds dying down. In a few minutes the storm is gone, disappearing as suddenly as it came. Soon everyone begins digging out from beneath the sand cover. Miraculously, no one is hurt, including Ahmed, who comes wandering back looking very dejected. Umar gives him a thorough scolding for panicking the way he did, warning that next time he might not be so lucky. All the camels are uninjured.
>
> Once Umar has made sure everyone is accounted for, he falls to his knees, repeatedly kissing an amulet he wears around his neck. He orders everyone else to fall on their knees and join him in thanking Fate for her kindness.

The passing sandstorm has left the wind perfectly still but the air is hazy, limiting visibility to less than a mile. The sun is visible only as a bright disk shining through the haze.

From this moment on, the PCs and all the other caravan members—including Ahmed, who tried to escape his fate by running away—are in the Borderland, the region between life and death mentioned in the tales of the desert nomads. (See "For the Dungeon Master" and below.) Nothing is noticeably different, at least not immediately, but they have all left their physical bodies and begun their hama-walk. In the world of the living, their bodies are slowly dying, buried under dense layers of sand.

The Borderland

The Borderland is composed partly of the living, partly of the dead—partly of spirit, partly of matter. It is a place where such distinctions are not clearly defined.

For most visitors, the Borderland is merely a brief way-stop on the journey to the afterlife, barely noticed at all before it is left behind. Some, however, stay longer within its domains, whether through free will or cursed fate. For transient visitors and more permanent residents alike, the presence or absence of an individual's shadow shows where that person belongs. Those with strong ties to the material world, the world of the living, cast full dark shadows in the twilight of the Borderland. Those who have lost their ties to their material existences have also lost their shadows. They have become spirits. Undead with corporeal forms fall into the former category; they still retain a tie to the world of the living. Such undead can rightfully be called the only true natives of the Borderland, because they exist in a state that is neither dead nor alive. The hama (MC13; described in the text) and all other spirits fall into the latter category. They have left the material world behind them for good.

Travel through the Borderland is a matter of will. Finding the way to a particular location can be a problem, however, as the PCs will discover when they try to return to the world of the living.

Time passes in the Borderland at the rate of one day (24-hour period) there being equal to one minute in the material world. While the PCs are in the Borderland, their bodies in the material world are slowly dying, suffocating under the burying sand. Each PC has 2-9 (1d8+1) rounds before his body dies, which translates to the same number of days in the Borderland. This number should be adjusted by any Constitution bonus to hit dice the PC might have (+1 for 15 Constitution, +2 for 16 Constitution, etc.). As their bodies in the material world weaken, the PCs' shadows in the Borderland gradually fade.

Although the concept of day and night exists in the Borderland, the distinction between the two is not as sharp as it is in the world of the living. Days are generally hazy, with the sun appearing only as a dimly shining disk. The daylight is not harmful to undead, although they avoid it out of habit. At night, the haze-shrouded sky appears to glow with a cool, bluish light strong enough to cast shadows. No moon or stars are ever visible. Range of vision is equivalent to that of a clear night with a full moon in the world of the living.

Combat in the Borderland is handled much the same way as in the material world. Spirits (beings without shadows) cannot be permanently hurt or killed by weapons or spells. Only their current forms can be destroyed, resulting in a new form being recreated almost immediately, but possibly at a different location. Only certain creatures with special characteristics (such as the ammut) can effectively pose a threat to the spirits. Creatures with shadows who are slain in the Borderland lose their shadows and assume hama-form. From then on, they are treated as spirits.

Spells and magical devices function normally in the Borderland. Spells are recovered as usual.

There are only two ways to leave the Borderland: continuing on to the afterlife or returning to the world of the living. Normally, a spirit can assume hama-form only in the material world, and then only under special circumstances. (Perhaps it still has a duty to fulfill.) A spirit cannot reenter its corporeal body in the material world unless powerful magic such as a *raise dead* or *resurrection* spell is used. A spirit can, however, assume its physical appearances while in the Last Oasis.

Creatures that still have shadows cannot journey on to the afterlife. There is no limit to how long a creature can wander through the Borderland before it decides to leave, although if its material body has died since it entered, it can only journey on, never go back. Undead can cross back and forth between the Borderland and the world of the living, provided they can find the border between the two worlds.

The Last Oasis is a special sanctuary in the Borderland. Within its confines, hama and other spirits can assume their mortal appearances for as long as they wish, provided they do not drink from the *holy water* fountain. They still do not cast shadows, however. Undead avoid the oasis because of the fountain.

In the Borderland

See "The Borderland" sidebar for a description of movement, combat, and magic in the Borderland.

The hazy weather conditions described above persist for the duration of the PCs' stay in the Borderland, even at night.

The Obelisk

Immediately after resuming their journey after the sandstorm, the PCs come upon a strange sight.

> A short distance ahead, you see a tall obelisk protruding at a slight angle from a large sand dune. Umar seems concerned and orders the caravan to stop. You notice what appears to be a woman lying face down on the sand at the base of the obelisk. She is dressed in a fine white robe that covers her completely from head to toe. Quiet sobs float over the sand from her direction.
>
> Umar exclaims, "My liver! I've never seen that obelisk here before. The sandstorm must have uncovered it. This is not a good sign."

Umar and the other caravan drivers are hesitant to approach the obelisk. It appears to be an ancient remnant of a long-dead civilization but bears no inscriptions that would help to identify it. The obelisk's surface is badly eroded by wind and sand.

If the PCs move closer, they see the half-buried body of a dead man in the sand near the woman. Nearby, a withered arm sticks up out of a sand dune. Two more humps in the sand might be more bodies.

As soon as the PCs dismount and come within 15' of the woman, she lifts her head toward them, revealing a ghastly face of death and decay. With a raspy, coarse voice from her dry throat she cries, "Water! I need water. Please give me water." She quickly rises to her feet. Umar cries, "May the gods have mercy on us! It's a ghul!"

Ghul: INT very; AL CE; AC 4; MV 15; HD 4; hp 19; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-8; SA paralyzation and stench; SD undead immunities; SZ M; ML 14; XP 650; MM/131 (Ghast). The ghast cannot be turned by a priest; it is bound to this location.

The ghul was once Latifa al-Djemel, the wealthy merchant from Qudra mentioned in the "Introduction." Latifa

was so overcome by rage and grief after the bandits' attack on her caravan that she could not die in peace. Her intense desire to claim her revenge on the bandits, in combination with the horrible death from thirst she suffered, caused her transformation into a ghul. Her guards became zombies under her control. (See below.) When the PCs arrive, the ghul is obsessed with finding water to drink and wants nothing more than to be freed from its cursed existence.

If the PCs approach the ghul to give it water, they notice the horrid stench of carrion (save vs. poison or suffer retching and nausea; −2 to attack rolls if save is not made). The ghul drinks a little of the water, but then drops the container and rushes toward the caravan drivers. It has recognized Ahmed, who took part in the attack against Latifa's caravan.

In a hideous voice it screams, "Now you shall die, you coward!" It does its best to attack Ahmed, ignoring others unless they block its way. Ahmed's camel jerks backward as the ghul approaches, throwing poor Ahmed to the ground. He quickly scrambles to his feet and tries to find somewhere to hide. Umar, in his frightened state, loses control of his own camel as Ahmed's beast darts by. He, too, falls to the ground as his mount spins around and runs off.

The four zombies lying under the sand nearby suddenly rise to join the ghul's side in the battle. They are wearing their old uniforms but have no weapons.

If the ghul is attacked or denied the water it wants, it attacks, which also causes the zombies to rise.

Zombies (4): INT non; AL N; AC 8; MV 6; HD 2; hp 11, 9, 7, 6; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SD undead immunities; SZ M; ML special; XP 65; MM/373. Zombies always strike last in each round. They cannot be turned because they are tied to this place.

When the PCs manage to kill the ghul, it falls to the ground and instantly turns into dust, releasing a white dove. The bird quickly takes to the air and flies off (toward the Last Oasis). The zombies likewise turn into dust, each releasing a falcon that joins the dove in its flight.

Umar has heard of hama, or bird spirits, and explains to the PCs and the other caravan drivers that they have seen a good sign; the woman's spirit is free at last.

Ahmed is badly shaken by what happened. He recognized the uniforms of Latifa's guards. Being of desert nomad origin, he has also heard of hama and ghuls before. He is not as sure as Umar that there is nothing to fear now.

Ahmed claims to have no idea why the ghul went for him. (A lie, of course.) If the PCs attempt to press the matter further, Umar steps in and asks them to go easy on Ahmed, as he has been through a lot recently—first the sandstorm and now the ghul.

Desert Ruins

Shortly after leaving the obelisk, the caravan reaches the crest of a high hill. The sight that awaits the PCs on the other side will give them their first inkling that all is not as it should be.

> As the caravan continues over the crest of a large sand dune, you discover that the desert ahead is dotted with ruins. Obelisks, collapsed walls, ruined towers, and other half-tumbled structures stand everywhere, as far as your eyes can see through the hazy air. The caravan drivers cast worried glances at each other. Umar clutches the lucky charm he wears around his neck as he quietly mumbles, "Nothing like this was here last time. Nothing!"
>
> Some distance ahead you spot movement. A legion of soldiers with standards flying high is marching in your direction on a broad front. One of the caravan drivers shouts that they must be the emir's troops heading back to Qudra, but the standards they are carrying seem unfamiliar. There appear to be several hundred men in the troop.

The ruins are from ancient, forgotten civilizations. The soldiers are the restless spirits of long-dead men, members of one of the armies that contributed to laying waste the region that is now known as the Haunted Lands. When the troop comes closer, an observant PC might notice that none of the soldiers cast shadows. (See sidebar.) They are not undead, however, and cannot be turned.

If the PCs stay on the hill with the caravan, the soldiers pass by below. Their dress and weapons are unfamiliar and look archaic. As soon as the soldiers get close to the PCs, one of the standard-bearers leaves the rest of his unit and quickly walks up toward them.

> "Es salam alekum on behalf of general Ala'i bin Aasim al-Hutut," the standard-bearer intones. "We are lost and request your directions to the city of Taif."

There is no city named Taif in Zakhara. Umar is dumbfounded. He nervously rubs his good luck amulet. If the PCs ask where the troops are from, the standard-bearer replies, "From the kingdom of Hutut, of course. Do you not see our standards?" The standard-bearer is not interested in engaging in lengthy discussion. He departs to return to his unit as soon as it becomes obvious that the PCs have no idea where Taif is located.

As the standard-bearer leaves, one of the caravan drivers exclaims, "Did you see? He had no shadow!" A few of the men suggest it might be best to turn back. Umar seems unsure what to do. The PCs will have to take the lead from now on.

If the PCs try to follow the troops, they quickly discover that they cannot keep up with the soldiers. Although the strange men appear to be walking, their movement rate is twice that of a camel (MV 42). They are following a path they have taken many times in the past. (See "The Borderland" for more information on movement in the Borderland.)

The Journey Onward

Regardless of which direction the PCs take after leaving the hilltop, they soon spot an oasis in the distance.

> Barely discernible in the distance ahead is what appears to be an oasis. Dense vegetation surrounds some form of building at the oasis's center. A large golden dome is visible above the treetops.
>
> Once again, the veteran caravan drivers seem surprised, muttering that they have never seen this oasis before. Suddenly there is a cry of horror from among them. It is Ahmed. He is white with fear and shaking uncontrollably as he sobs, "No! No! This cannot be!" Umar rides up to him but seems unable to calm him.

Ahmed is devastated because he realizes that he is seeing the Last Oasis. His fear soon sends him into a dazed,

catatonic condition. Further communication with him is impossible until the group arrives at the oasis.

Umar thinks Ahmed might have been struck by some form of curse cast on him by the ghul. He asks the PCs to help. No form of magic will improve Ahmed's condition, however. When this becomes apparent, Umar suggests they head for the oasis to rest a while before continuing on their journey.

If the PCs avoid the oasis they can ride on for several hours before nightfall. As soon as it becomes dark (as dark as it gets in the Borderland) they see mysterious shapes moving out among the ruins surrounding them. These are ghul eager to kill any travelers they can catch. If the PCs set up camp anywhere in the desert, each hour there is a 50% chance that 1-2 wandering ghuls will attack. Near any ruins the risk increases to a 75% chance of meeting 2-4 ghuls.

Ghuls: INT low; AL CE; AC 6; MV 9; HD 2; hp 9 each; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA paralyzation; SD undead immunities; SZ M; ML 12; XP 175; MM/131 (Ghoul).

The desert of ruins stretches onward—seemingly forever—in all directions. The only safe place to spend the night is at the Last Oasis. Once the PCs decide to turn back to the oasis, it will take them less than an hour to reach it, regardless of how far they traveled. As the legends say, finding the way to the Last Oasis is much easier than finding the way back to the world of the living.

The Last Oasis

Several important NPCs are at the oasis when the PCs arrive. The DM should be thoroughly familiar with each of these characters before playing this section. They are presented below in "Arrival at the Oasis."

During the PCs' stay at the oasis, a series of events will occur. These are described in "Chronicle of Events" (page 66). The PCs arrive at the oasis in the late afternoon.

Arrival at the Oasis

> Beyond the dense bushes surrounding the oasis lies a lush and wondrous garden filled with thousands of flowers in a dazzling array of colors. At the center of the garden sits a large fountain, finely decorated in tiles of blue and gold. Water jets up from the fountain, forming delicately shifting patterns in the air high above. A large mud-brick building stands near the fountain, its front door slightly ajar. At the other end of the garden, a mosque crowned by a golden dome rises skyward.
>
> The trees and bushes of the garden are filled with exotic and colorful birds of varieties you have never seen before, all of them singing beautiful songs that add to the atmosphere of paradise.
>
> The caravan drivers fall silent, their mouths open in awe. Ahmed jumps off his camel and falls to his knees, exclaiming, "We're all dead. Don't you understand? This is the Last Oasis. We're all dead!" At that moment, an old man comes out of the mud-brick building and walks toward you.

Ahmed keeps repeating, "I'm dead! I'm dead!" to himself as he holds his head in his hands and sobs. His only reaction to questions by the PCs is to say, "This is the Last Oasis. We're all dead!"

The old man walks up to the group and presents himself as Ala'i al-Qatar, caretaker of the oasis.

Ala'i al-Qatar: AL NG; AC 10; MV 12; T9 (merchant-rogue); hp 26; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (unarmed); SD immune to paralysis and poison; S 8, D 12, C 10, I 16, W 17, Ch 15; ML 8. Proficiencies: appraising, debate (see *AA*, page 73), etiquette, forgery, haggling, musical instrument (flute), reading/writing.

Ala'i appears to be in his eighties or nineties. His face is thin and very wrinkled, his gray beard neatly trimmed. His head is bald underneath the keffiyeh he wears. A dark blue dolman of very fine fabric reveals his urban origins. His pace is slow, both when he moves and when he speaks. He does not cast a shadow. (See sidebar on page 60.)

Ala'i was once a successful merchant in a long-forgotten city somewhere in the Haunted Lands. He was very different back then and prefers not to talk about those days. He became caretaker of the oasis through his own choice, to atone for his past bad deeds. He is very happy with his job and takes great pleasure in tending to all the plants and trees that grow in the oasis, as well as greeting new visitors when they arrive. "Es salam alekum, my guests. I would be greatly honored if you would stay a while and enjoy the hospitality of this oasis before continuing on your journey. We have plenty of space for you and your splendid camels. I believe there are some other visitors here who would also like to meet you."

He greets each PC and all the other caravan members by name—although no one has told him their names. Before he has a chance to answer any questions, Latifa al-Djemel arrives. She has resumed her mortal appearance, although she is a spirit and therefore does not cast a shadow. (See sidebar for the special properties of the Last Oasis.)

> As Ala'i introduces himself, a woman steps into view near the fountain, accompanied by four men. You recognize the woman's clothes and the men's uniforms from your encounter at the obelisk. The woman rushes toward you with a smile on her face, exclaiming, "My friends! I'm so glad to see you."

The woman is Latifa al-Djemel. Regardless of what the PCs did to her ghul-form at the obelisk, she thanks them for freeing her so that she can continue on her journey.

Latifa al-Djemel: AL CG; AC 7; MV 12; T5 (merchant-rogue); hp 20; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (unarmed); SD immune to paralysis and poison; S 11, D 17, C 13, I 12, W 15, Ch 16; ML 10. Proficiencies: bureaucracy, debate, etiquette, haggling, modern language (Jannti), reading/writing.

Latifa is a beautiful woman in her thirties. She has long black hair and dark mysterious eyes. Her teeth are blindingly white when she smiles, which she does very often (except when around Ahmed or Farida; see below). She is strong willed but kind and honest.

> Ahmed cowers in terror upon seeing Latifa. As soon as the merchant sees him, she walks up and spits in his face. Turning to face you again, she angrily remarks, "I'm surprised to see this son of a dog in your company. But perhaps you do not know who he is? He's a bandit. He participated in the attack against my caravan. I'd recognize his cowardly and honorless face anywhere."

Ahmed is almost too terrified to

speak. All he can say is, "I'm dead! I'm dead!" over and over again. Latifa pushes him over onto the ground and walks away.

Ala'i intercedes before matters go any further.

> "Please, my guests. Let us not be angry with each other. What is done is done and cannot be changed. We must all learn to accept our fate.
>
> "Let us now prepare for today's feast to celebrate the arrival of our new friends, and the onward journey of Latifa and her loyal guards. You are all invited, of course."

Observant PCs should notice that the people they have just met do not cast shadows. The PCs and the caravan drivers do have shadows. As time runs out for each PC (and NPC) while they're in the Borderland, their shadows gradually shrink until, finally, nothing is left and they cannot return to the material world. The PCs should notice this happening soon after reaching the oasis. (Ahmed is a special case; his shadow disappears quickly because he ran out into the sandstorm instead of trying to remain protected from it.) Some PCs' shadows will shrink more quickly than others', depending on how much time each person has left. As they meet the other NPCs at the oasis they will discover that only Farida, the mysterious and eccentric hakima, casts a shadow.

If the PCs ask Ala'i where they are, he smiles and gently answers them.

> "This is the Last Oasis, my friends. You are not dead—yet—but you are dying. That is why you are here. You have come to make a decision whether to live or to die. As long as you cast a shadow, you can return to the world of the living, but once you lose your shadow, you can only go on to the afterlife."
>
> Upon hearing this, Umar falls to his knees, wailing loudly. "No, this cannot be! This cannot be! Have you abandoned me, O Fate?"
>
> Ahmed sits silently, staring at his shadow on the ground. A smile spreads over his face as he bends forward and kisses it repeatedly.

The way back to the world of the living lies through the desert of ruins. Ala'i does not know the exact route to follow. He suggests the PCs talk to Farida, a hakima who also lives in the oasis. She might be able to help them go back. Latifa warns the PCs that Farida might not be entirely trustworthy, however.

Ala'i repeats his invitation for everyone to enter the oasis. He quietly speaks a few reassuring words to Ahmed and Umar, bringing both of them to their feet again and leading them into the oasis, but only after Umar convinces Ala'i to first share some salt with him.

> "You are free to wander about the oasis as you please, my friends. I only ask for your own sake that you not drink the holy water of the fountain if you wish to return to the world of the living. Drinking the holy water will completely remove any desire you have to go back. You will find a trough for your camels and a well yielding ordinary water next to my humble dwelling."

Refer to the description of area 1 in the oasis for more information on the effects of the water in the fountain.

As the PCs enter the oasis, they are greeted by a young soldier named Aziz bin Ala'i. Ala'i, the old caretaker, introduces the soldier as his son. Aziz approaches any warriors among the PCs first.

> "Greetings, fellow warriors. May your courage and honor guide your way and strengthen your resolve. May Fate smile upon you always and grant you victory in battle. Greetings also to you, honored guests who accompany these fine warriors on their quest."

Aziz bin Ala'i (guardian of the oasis): AL LN; AC 3; MV 12; F7 (faris); hp 41; THAC0 14; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; SD immune to paralysis and poison; S 14, D 17, C 16, I 11, W 10, Ch 14; ML 17; *scimitar +2, studded leather +1,* composite short bow, two daggers. Proficiencies: debate, display weapon prowess (see *AA*, page 73), endurance singing, religion (ancient).

Aziz is a young man in his early thirties. He is lanky, with long limbs and a narrow face. His hair is black and his eyes are dark brown. He wears studded leather armor with a flowing red cape attached to the shoulders. On his head he wears a red keffiyeh with a gold-colored agal. A scimitar, which he calls

Al-Kazar, hangs in a gem-encrusted sheath by his side. He has two daggers in the sash around his waist and a composite short bow strapped to his back along with a quiver holding 20 arrows. He does not cast a shadow.

Aziz is a soldier to the core. He loves the excitement of battle, the test of strength and courage. Although he might appear rather scrawny, he is a capable swordsman with a great deal of skill. (He is specialized in the scimitar.) He likes nothing better than exchanging combat stories with other warriors and showing off his prowess with the scimitar. When dealing with the PCs, he may ignore those who are not warriors.

Aziz was once a commander in an army belonging to one of the forgotten kingdoms. He took part in many wars and battles, and unfortunately committed many acts he would rather forget. He took the opportunity to serve as guardian of the oasis as a means of atoning for some of the wrongs he did. Ala'i regards Aziz as his adopted son and is very fond of him. They are not actually related in any way.

> After introductions have been made, Aziz excitedly begins telling an incredible story about an encounter he once had with five hostile giants and how he was forced to battle them on his own with nothing more than a small fruit knife as a weapon. As he is speaking, you hear a voice nearby exclaim, "Aziz, do not bore our poor guests with your endless stories. Introduce me to them instead!"
>
> The surprisingly deep female voice comes from a tall, slender woman standing in the shade of some dense trees near the fountain. She is clad from head to toe in a flowing white robe. A thin veil covers her mouth. Aziz casts an angry glance in her direction as Ala'i introduces her as Farida, a hakima.

Farida (great ghul masquerading as hakima): INT high; AL NE; AC 0; MV 18, burrow 3, climb 12; HD 4; hp 27; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/2-12; SA *shocking grasp* at will; SD +1 or better weapon to hit, *polymorph self* at will, *invisible* at will, undead immunities; SZ M; ML 10; XP 2,000; MC13. Spells: *sand slumber* (×2; see below).

Farida appears as a tall, thin woman in her fifties, dressed in a white robe of finest silk that resembles a chador but without the face-covering. She wears a thin veil to conceal her mouth, but the strong red color on her lips shows through. She wears a great deal of makeup on her face, particularly around her eyes to make them look larger and more mysterious. The overall impression is greatly overdone and tasteless, however. To mask her disagreeable smell, she drenches herself with perfumes and fragrances. Farida has a strong, surprisingly deep voice considering her slim appearance. She loves to talk but is not very good at listening.

Farida is undead but cannot be turned while in the oasis; elsewhere she is turned as a wraith. Her true form resembles a ghoul or ghast with donkey ears and feet, clawed fingers, and a powerful jaw. She never shows herself in public in that form, preferring instead to appear as described above. Great ghuls are not related to humans; they are undead elemental cousins of the genies.

Farida is a 2nd-level wizard. She favors earth magic (sand) spells. The *sand slumber* spell she has memorized will put a victim of any species, class, or level to sleep for 1d4+2 rounds unless a saving throw vs. spell is successful. If the save succeeds, the victim is merely *slowed* for one round. The victim must be touched for the spell to take effect. The spell will not affect undead. Noise is not enough to rouse a person affected by the spell. Farida will use this spell only for defense, in case she is attacked by the PCs.

Farida casts a shadow (see sidebar), but this might not be readily apparent because she stays out of the daylight as much as possible. This is her personal preference; sunlight cannot harm her.

She is very knowledgeable about the Borderland and the paths through it leading to the world of the living. The PCs might decide to enlist her help to leave the Borderland. (See "The Journey Back.")

Farida's task is to take care of evil persons entering the oasis, by feeding them to her two pet ammuts. Their spirits are thus sent to the infernal regions. Ala'i and Aziz tolerate her because she has a role to fulfill, but they usually avoid her company. Aziz, in particular, detests her and is revolted by what she is and what she does. Farida finds Aziz's strong dislike amusing and teases him whenever possible.

Farida wears a magical amulet that renders the *holy water* in the fountain harmless to her. The amulet does not grant her immunity to any other *holy water*, however.

Farida loves new company and throws herself on the PCs and the caravan drivers. She tries very hard to be friendly but tends to overdo it, becoming overbearing instead.

> "Welcome, honored guests—and might I even say dearest friends—to the Last Oasis. I am Farida, the Maiden of the Oasis. We're all so glad to have you here, especially all you brave, handsome warriors. I'm also known as the Comforter of Warriors, you see."

Farida winks broadly, causing Aziz to cringe and throw his hands up in disgust.

She proceeds to greet everyone personally, paying particular attention to Umar. ("My, what a handsome young man you are!") She also tries using her charms on Ahmed, but he does his best to avoid her. She tries to come across as being genuinely concerned about the welfare of each PC as well, even though she doesn't care a bit about them.

In the Oasis

The oasis is a safe haven for everyone passing through the Borderland. The undead and other vile creatures that dwell in the Borderland avoid entering the oasis because of the fountain of holy water at its center.

1. Fountain.

> The fountain consists of a shallow pool set with tiles in shades of blue and gold arranged in intricate patterns forming abstract depictions of birds. Water jets upward high into the air from several nozzles placed just below the pool's surface.

The water from the fountain tastes good and is exceptionally refreshing. It is equivalent to holy water and can be used as such against undead (excluding Farida as long as she wears her amulet). The water instantly restores anyone beset by fatigue or other ailments such as depression or anxiety, but it also causes memories of life in the world of the living to fade. This effect is not noticeable to the drinker. Others might notice that their friend no longer seems to remember certain events that oc-

curred before entering the oasis.

Each time a person drinks from the fountain, he forgets 1-4 years of his life (unless a saving throw vs. spell is successful), beginning with events that occurred most recently. This loss of memory affects only events that occurred prior to entering the oasis. It does not affect spells memorized or basic concepts such as language, knowledge of one's own name, and recognition of friends and loved ones.

Drinking the water also causes the person's shadow to fade (unless the previously mentioned saving throw vs. spell was successful). Three sips of the water are enough to make a shadow completely disappear. After a person has completely lost his shadow, drinking any more of the water changes that person instantly and irrevocably to true hama-form.

The water loses its potency (even as holy water) 1-4 rounds after being taken from the fountain.

Birds of all varieties, including many colorful and exotic species, flock to the fountain and sit among the trees of the oasis. They are all spirits, in hama-form, of men and women who do not yet wish to leave for the afterlife. Most await the arrival of a loved one. They do not interact with the PCs.

Hama: INT varies; AL N or G; AC 7; MV 1, fly 30; HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 20; #AT 2; Dmg 1-3/1-3; SA fear; SD immaterial form; SZ S; ML 10; XP 120; MC13.

Hama are spirit birds formed when the soul rises from the body after death. Normally, hama can be of any alignment, but those found in the Last Oasis are all good or neutral. Hama can appear as any kind of bird, but evil persons generally take the forms of awkward, flightless birds. Persons of good or neutral alignment become graceful and powerful birds such as falcons, eagles, and owls. The hama of evil people are eaten by Farida's ammuts, thereby banishing their spirits to the lower planes.

2. Ala'i al-Qatar's House.

> The simple facade of this building hides an elegant dwelling fitting for a wealthy merchant. Large, airy rooms circle an open courtyard with a small garden. The furnishings are sparse and of modest appearance.

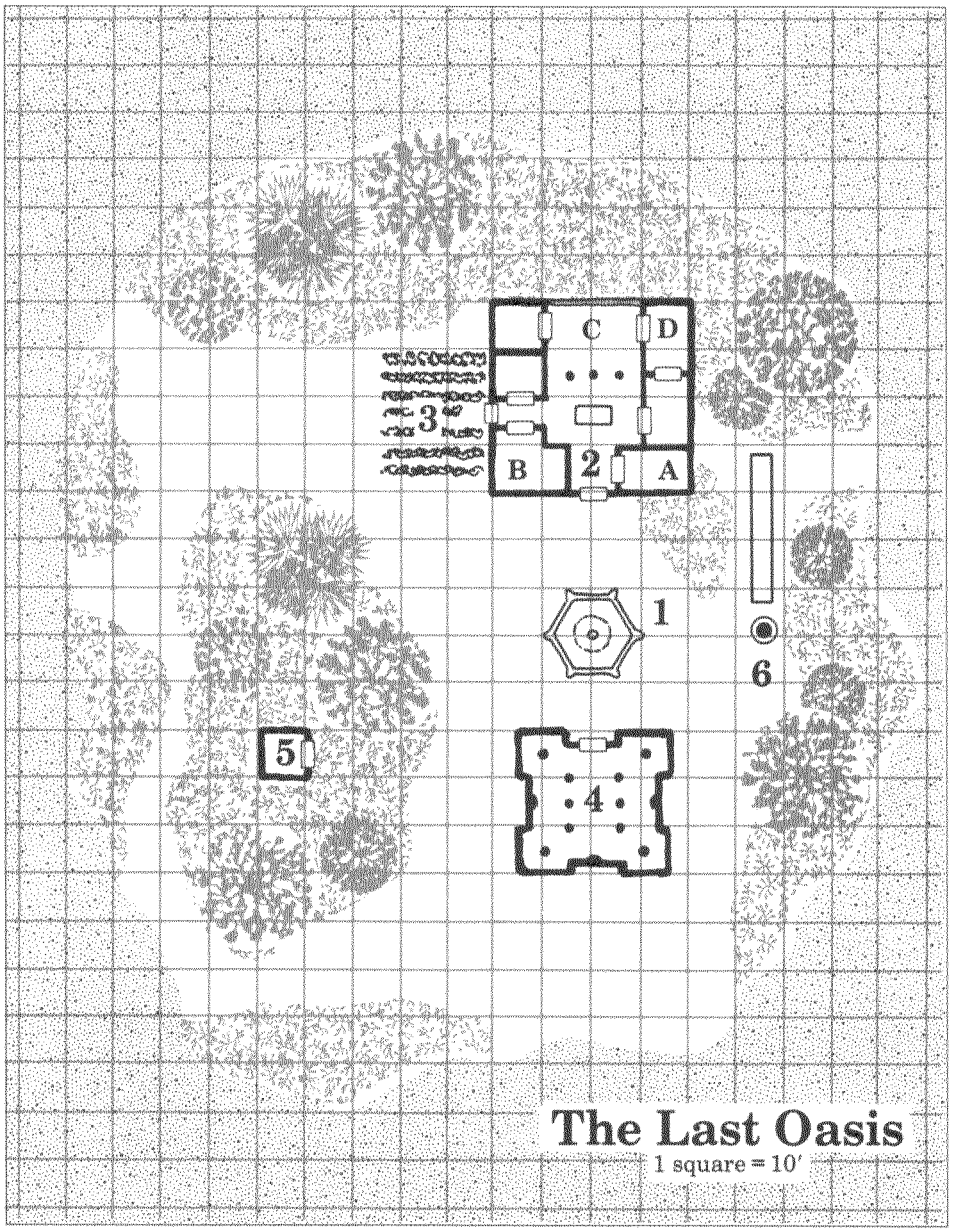
The central garden is well tended, with beautiful flowers in a splendid array of colors. Aziz and Ala'i each has his own room in the house. Each bedroom holds a simple bed and a number of personal belongings.

Aziz's room (area A) contains a wide assortment of blade weapons such as scimitars, long swords, short swords, and daggers. Aziz occasionally practices with these weapons to keep up his proficiency in them. He also has a chest containing a second set of studded leather armor and several banners emblazoned with his family's and his city's colors.

Ala'i's room (area B) contains a writing desk and a small bookcase holding several books on horticulture that he has written. Each book provides expert advice on growing and maintaining a beautiful garden.

Area C is a large dining room (where the feast described under "Event 1" is held). Area D is the kitchen. Other areas of the house are storage rooms.

3. Vegetable Garden. The garden's neat rows of herbs and vegetables are planted and tended by Ala'i.



4. Mosque.

> The interior of the mosque is impressively decorated with multicolored mosaics laid out in beautiful and complex patterns along the walls and the many archways. The proverb, "There is no Fate but the Fate which we are given," is inscribed above the main archway, just inside the entrance.

The mosque is a place of prayer used diligently by all the inhabitants of the oasis, including Farida. The PCs will be called to prayer by Ala'i three times a day during their stay in the oasis.

5. Shadowy Grove. Dense vegetation grows in this part of the oasis, creating areas of deep shadow. This is where Farida the great ghul lives with her ammuts. Farida's dwelling appears to be a small mud-brick hut with a thatched roof. Inside, however, it is much larger. If the PCs enter, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> The mud walls of Farida's simple hut conceal something quite different inside. The single 30'-square room is lavishly appointed with furniture and carpets of the finest quality. At the center of the room, three comfortable divans overflowing with large pillows are positioned around an elegantly carved coffee table. Finely decorated coffee cups stand neatly arranged on the table. A copper kettle hangs nearby over a brazier filled with glowing charcoal.

Farida's two ammuts live in the darkest corners of the grove, hiding from sight except when she calls for them. They bark occasionally, sounding very much like large dogs. Farida refers to them as her pets and gladly shows them to the PCs if asked.

Ammuts (2): INT average; AL NE; AC 3; MV 9, swim 12, burrow 3; HD 6; hp 33, 27; THAC0 15; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 2-16 (bite) or 1-8/1-8 (claws); SA swallow whole, roar (20' radius, save vs. poison or go deaf for 1-10 rounds); SZ L (12' long); ML 14; XP 650; MC13.

An ammut's tail and legs are those of a crocodile, its bloated belly and fat neck belong to a hippo, and its muscular arms and head resemble those of a lioness. Its purpose in life is to eat the hama (spirits) of the evil and the damned.

6. Camel Trough and Well. The well yields ordinary water.

Chronicle of Events

This part of the adventure is based on events that occur in a chronological order. Through their actions, the PCs might postpone some events or even completely eliminate them. In some cases, the order of the events might be changed. It is up to the DM to decide when to run each event.

Event 1: The Feast

Evening is approaching when Ala'i calls the PCs and the caravan drivers to a feast to celebrate their arrival and the onward journey of Latifa and her guards. All the NPCs of the oasis are present, providing the PCs with an excellent opportunity to get to know them better. The feast takes place in Ala'i's house (area 2C).

> Ala'i has set the table with large servings of everything the oasis has to offer, mainly dates and numerous other kinds of fruits, both common and exotic. A few birds from the oasis have flown into the central garden, adding to the beauty of the setting through their pleasant songs and vibrant colors. Before the dinner begins, Latifa asks permission to sing a song as a way of thanking Ala'i for his hospitality.
>
> The words of her stirring song speak of the freedom of the caravan riders, of the adventure of traveling to wondrous far-off destinations, and of the happiness of those who have found what is truly valuable in life under the stars of the desert.

After Latifa's song, the feast gets under way. Ala'i tends to his duties as host by seeing to it that everyone gets enough to eat and drink.

Latifa tells the PCs about her encounter with the desert bandits, how they cruelly left her and her guards to die in the desert after robbing them of everything. She repeatedly casts angry glances at Ahmed as she speaks, and he does his best to avoid her gaze.

Aziz also converses with the PCs, asking about past battle experiences. He tells them stories of the many heroic battles he has fought, each more incredible and fantastic than the last. Farida yawns loudly several times as he speaks.

> Suddenly Ahmed screams. He is waving his hands in front of one of the lamps on the table while staring at the wall where his shadow should be—but it is barely visible. He falls to his knees and begs you to help him.

Farida casually states that, in the world of the living, Ahmed's body is dying. She turns to the PCs and offers her assistance.

> "Time is running out for our dear Ahmed, my friends. Soon he'll no longer be able to go back. But fear not! The Maiden of the Oasis can help you. That's why I'm here, after all!
>
> "I can help you return to the world of the living before it's too late, before your shadows fade, too. We'll depart tomorrow morning, unless you have any objections. . . . No? It's settled then. I'm looking forward to our journey together, my sweet darlings."

Farida does not eat during the feast; she prefers more substantial food. Aziz whispers a warning to the PCs against trusting Farida, although he admits that she is very knowledgeable about the Borderland. He has no alternative suggestions for how the PCs might find their way back to the world of the living.

Farida does not offer her help out of goodwill. Her motives are purely selfish. As a great ghul, she constantly hungers for corpses to eat, but only spirits and undead dwell in the Borderland, so she must venture into the world of the living to find food. Her plan is to turn the PCs and the caravan drivers into her next feast by following them into the world of the living and attacking them there.

She intends to kill as many of the group members as possible before they leave the Borderland, thus leaving fewer opponents for her to overcome later. (Their bodies will still remain in the world of the living for her to eat.) She will be careful not kill everyone, however, because she cannot find their dead bodies in the world of the living without knowing where to look. Only they know exactly where to cross the border between the two worlds. See "Event 3: Lurking Ghuls" and "The Journey Back" for more details about her plan.

A short while later, an unexpected visitor arrives.

An hour or so into the feast, you notice an unfamiliar old man standing in the courtyard, staring at you intently. The others at the table fall silent as the man continues gazing at you, his eyes going from person to person. Farida mutters, "Oh, no! Not him again!" under her breath.

Ala'i rises from the table and walks toward the man, his hand held out as if to gently take hold of him. The man points a bony finger at Ahmed and shouts, "You're doomed, young man. Doomed!" He ends his words with a violent wave of his hands as if to further underscore what he has just said. As he moves, you notice his shadow playing over the walls and ceiling.

Ala'i and the other NPCs at the oasis have seen the man before. He has never introduced himself to them; he comes only to look and listen. Sometimes he speaks, but mostly he is just a nuisance. Ala'i usually tries to escort him out of the oasis as quickly as possible.

Hermit: AL CG; AC 10; MV unlimited (see below); C9 (mystic); hp 43; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (unarmed); S 9, D 12, C 11, I 14, W 18, Ch 14; ML 16. Proficiencies: ancient history, ancient languages (Kadari, Noga), endurance, herbalism, meditation, reading/writing, religion. The hermit cannot cast spells while visiting the Borderland.

The hermit appears as an old man in his late sixties, dressed in a simple robe of coarse brown cloth without adornment. His wrinkled face is framed by a bushy head of gray hair and an unkempt gray beard. His Movement Rate is unlimited in the Borderland. (In effect, he can instantly *teleport* to any destination.)

The old man is a hermit who has mastered the art of deep meditation. He uses this power to learn the secrets of the spirits by traveling to the Borderland while his body remains in the world of the living. (See also "Event 4: The Hermit Returns.") This form of travel requires great concentration, which is why he is not very communicative. It also prohibits him from casting spells while in the Borderland.

If the PCs try to attack the hermit, or otherwise do anything to frighten him, he is gone in an instant. If they try talking to him, his only response is to say matter-of-factly, "You should not be here. You should return." He vanishes soon after being taken outside, or after delivering his message to the PCs.

The last traces of the sun are rapidly disappearing beyond the horizon when the feast is finally over and the time comes for Latifa and her guards to leave. Everyone walks outside where she makes her final farewells.

"We've delayed long enough. It's time for us to leave. Thank you once again for freeing me from my cursed existence as a ghul. May Fate be with you on your quest to return to the world of the living. As for us, we must leave the Borderland behind. Perhaps we shall meet again some day."

With a last wave of her hand, Latifa shifts shape and becomes a white dove. Her guards change into falcons. Together the birds fly up into the air and out of the oasis, heading for the distant setting sun barely visible above the horizon through the hazy air.

After they have disappeared beyond sight, the stillness of the evening is disturbed by Farida loudly blowing her nose as she sobs, "The darlings! What a beautiful sight." Her heavy makeup is running, making her look quite ghastly.

Before she retires for the evening, Farida tries to give each PC a kiss on the cheek and promises to see them again tomorrow morning.

Event 2: Ahmed's Fate

After the feast is over, Umar and the other caravan drivers tend to the camels while Ahmed steals over to the fountain. During the feast, Farida had quietly told Ahmed that Ala'i was lying when he said they should not drink the fountain's water. She told Ahmed that this water was the only way for him to restore his shadow and return to the world of the living.

Ahmed fills his cup and drinks the water. Feeling its positive effects, he fills it again and drinks some more. Soon he calls out to the other caravan drivers to come and join him, shouting that he has found the secret of getting back to the world of the living. If the PCs are not present, they hear Ahmed's calls.

Ahmed is laughing loudly as he stands by the fountain drinking cup after cup of water from it. Suddenly, he suffers a seizure and falls to the ground in a quivering mass. In an instant his body turns into a large ugly bird with very small wings. Farida steps out from the dense grove of trees and quickly strides up to the bird.

"Dearest Ahmed, your time has come. You've drunk the water of the fountain and your shadow is gone. You've been very foolish, but it's too late now for regrets. You're expected at another place, and your new masters aren't quite as patient as those of Latifa and her guards."

Farida calls out for her pets, and soon two horrid beasts resembling a cross between a crocodile, a lioness, and a hippopotamus appear, roaring loudly. Their deafening roar hurts your ears and sends ice-cold shivers down your spines. It also seems to paralyze the bird that once was Ahmed.

All PCs within 20′ of the ammuts (see area 5) must make a saving throw vs. poison or be deafened by the ammuts' roars for 1-10 rounds. If the PCs attempt to interfere with the ammuts' feeding frenzy, the creatures attack until Farida manages to call them off.

The creatures throw themselves on the bird and tear it to shreds with their fangs and claws, eagerly gulping down the pieces to fill their bloated bellies. The bird is gone in seconds. Afterward, they eye you and the caravan drivers. Umar, in particular, appears to attract their attention. He falls to his knees, begging you to help him escape from this nightmarish place.

After the ammuts are done, Farida gives each of them a pat on the head and sends them back into the grove. "Aren't they just adorable?" she gushes. "And so affectionate, too."

Event 3: Lurking Ghuls

Ala'i invites the PCs to sleep anywhere they wish in the oasis. Aziz promises to patrol the oasis and protect them from intruders during the night.

A few hours into the night, a roving band of eight **ghuls** (hp 13, 11, 10, 9 (×2), 8, 7, 3, see page 62 for complete statistics) approaches the oasis. They sense the presence of the PCs but do not dare to enter because of the holy water fountain.

The ghouls remain just beyond the perimeter of the oasis, stalking back and forth as if searching for an entrance.

Aziz invites the PCs to strike down the ghouls if they wish. He strongly recommends staying in the oasis and using missile weapons against them. Anyone leaving the oasis is instantly attacked.

The ghouls can be turned normally. They will not enter the oasis. If the ghouls are being badly beaten without a getting chance to strike back, they flee.

Soon after the battle begins, Farida arrives, yelling curses at Aziz.

> "Aziz, you fool! Your head must be full of camel dung. Stop attacking these innocent creatures immediately. They are no threat. Don't you see that they are just poor, mindless creatures that don't know any better? Leave them alone and they will go away."

If the PCs stop attacking the ghouls, Aziz stops too, fuming that Farida should spoil his fun in this manner. The ghouls leave the oasis and its vicinity.

If the PCs continue their attack, Aziz ignores Farida's plea. She turns around and walks away, cursing Aziz for his cruelty and rudeness.

Event 4: The Hermit Returns

At the crack of dawn the next morning, the hermit reappears at the edge of the oasis. His shadow is plainly visible on the ground. He stands staring into the oasis as if waiting for something or someone. If the PCs approach him, he repeats what he said at yesterday's feast. "You should not be here. You should return." If the PCs tell him that they do not know the way back, he responds, "The path is unseen, but it is clearly marked." If the PCs specifically ask the hermit to show them the way back, he answers, "Follow, and I shall lead."

At this point Farida arrives, upset at seeing the hermit again.

> "Why are you listening to this old fool? He doesn't know the way back any more than you do. Why do you think he keeps coming to the oasis? He's as lost in the Borderland as you are."
>
> The hermit turns to her and calmly responds, "I know my way through the Borderland. I see things for what they are . . . including you, great ghul."

Farida is angered by the hermit's insolence and leaves in a huff, reminding the PCs that they know where to find her should they decide they need her help. The hermit repeats, "Follow, and I shall lead." He turns around and slowly walks away from the oasis.

If the PCs ask the other NPCs what they should do, Ala'i suggests they go with Farida, because he does not trust the old man. Aziz says they should go with the hermit.

If the PCs do not ask the hermit to help them or do not follow him when he leaves, he disappears, never to return.

The Journey Back

The PCs have three options for leaving the oasis. They can go with Farida, they can follow the hermit, or they can leave on their own. Of these, the last is the most dangerous and least likely to be successful.

If the PCs decide to leave with Farida, Aziz declares that he will come too, to prevent her from causing them any harm. Both Farida and Aziz assume hama (spirit bird) form as soon as they leave the oasis, although Farida is merely using her *polymorph self* ability. Farida becomes a vulture. Aziz becomes an eagle with reddish coloring. In a

ghastly voice befitting her scavenger form, Farida calls for the group to follow her. Aziz cannot speak in his hama form. Once he leaves the oasis, Aziz is not able to reassume human form until he returns to the oasis again. Farida can *polymorph* as she wishes but prefers to remain in vulture form; it makes traveling so much easier.

If the PCs decide to go with the hermit, both Farida and Aziz secretly follow them in hama form (as described above). Farida still hopes to be able to get at the PCs' and camel drivers' corpses in the world of the living, and Aziz is intent on keeping an eye on her.

If the PCs leave on their own, no one follows them. Farida is confident they will come crawling back to the oasis after they have discovered they cannot find the way by themselves. Aziz stays to keep an eye on Farida.

Whatever choice the PCs make, Umar and the other caravan drivers go with them, taking along all the camels. Umar tries to convince the PCs to join him in prayer in the mosque before departing, but he does not stay behind alone if they insist on leaving immediately.

When the PCs leave the oasis, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> As soon as you leave the oasis, the sky turns dark and cloudy. A chilling wind begins to blow. In the hazy distance you see dark shapes moving across the sand dunes, many clustering around the ancient artifacts and ruins dotting the landscape. You feel their eyes upon you as you begin your journey. Behind you, the Last Oasis is still bathed in brilliant sunlight, as if beckoning you to return.

Due to the strange time and space relationships of the Borderland, the way back to the world of the living is not the same way the PCs came when they arrived at the oasis. The way back goes through a much more perilous part of the Borderland, where creatures can appear suddenly, seemingly out of thin air.

If the PCs are following Farida in her vulture form, she flies along at a leisurely pace not too far above the caravan. She would not mind at all if the caravan members encountered a monster or two to further decimate their numbers before they manage to return to the world of the living. That would mean fewer opponents for her to fight once they reach the other side.

If the PCs are following the hermit, they find that he moves at a remarkable pace, almost as if he were gliding across the sand. Occasionally he stops to see that the caravan has not fallen too far behind. He urges the group on by repeating, "You should not be here. You must hurry!" over and over again.

If the PCs try to find the way back on their own, they have a 10% chance per day of successfully reaching the edge of the world of the living. (See "At the Edge.") If they are unsuccessful, they find themselves somewhere out in the desert at the end of the day. If they decide to turn around and head back to the Last Oasis, they will always reach it in one day, regardless of how far from it they have traveled. The PCs' shadows begin to fade after 2-8 days of travel. When their shadows are completely gone, the PCs can no longer return to their physical bodies in the world of the living. See "The Borderland" sidebar on page 60 for details.

The DM should devise more encounters (with ghouls or shadows, for example) as necessary if the PCs persist in making the journey by themselves.

Ghost Caravan

> Shortly after leaving the oasis, Umar shouts for the caravan to halt. Seemingly out of nowhere, another caravan has appeared to the side and slightly ahead of you. The wind carries with it a foul stench from that direction, and you notice that the camels of the other caravan look extremely skinny and wretched.

The six riders are actually **ghuls** (hp 11, 10, 9, 7, 5; see page 62 for complete statistics). Their camels are a lesser form of ghost mounts. Many years ago, the ghuls were desert bandits—some still carry the same blades they wielded then. Now they are lost in the Borderland. They attack immediately.

Ghost mount, lesser (6): INT low; AL N; AC 7; MV 21; HD 2; hp 13, 11, 9, 8, 6, 5; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SD undead immunities; SZ L; ML 11; XP 65. These undead creatures are lesser cousins of the dreaded ghost mounts (MC13). They have none of the special abilities of real ghost mounts, but are created in much the same way.

The ghuls attack the PCs from their camels, using their claw attacks. They cannot bite while mounted. Their mounts try to scare the PCs' camels into throwing the adventurers off and running away. Each PC must make a riding proficiency check to retain control over the camel and avoid falling off; camels without riders automatically panic and must be tracked down later. Riders who are not proficient automatically lose control of their mounts, which bolt for 1½ times their normal move. Nonproficient riders are thrown for 1d6 hp damage if they fail a Dexterity check with a −3 penalty.

Even if the riders retain control, the PCs' mounts are not trained for battle, so mounted PCs suffer a −2 penalty to attack rolls. Riders gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls against unmounted opponents, and creatures on foot suffer a −1 penalty to attack mounted creatures (per the *DMG*, page 76).

If the hermit is with the PCs, he is careful to stay out of harm's way. Aziz flies after any camels that flee, tugging at their reins with his beak and flapping his wings in their faces to force them to stop. Farida is content to watch the battle from above, chuckling wickedly to herself.

The Ammuts

Among the ruins, the PCs encounter a clan of ammuts ready to feed on the spirits of any evil persons that come their way.

> The region you are traveling through is dense with ancient ruins. Among the dark shadows of half-tumbled walls and fallen colonnades, you spot several large hulking shapes, gazing at you intently. They appear to be similar to the creatures that consumed Ahmed in the oasis.

One of the **ammuts** (hp 33) leaves the shadows and moves cautiously toward the PCs' caravan, sniffing the wind as it comes. If the hermit is with the caravan, he urges everyone to remain calm, noting that the creature will not attack unless provoked. Farida, if she is present, is immediately enamored of the beast and cries out, "My, what a lovely little darling!" She remains in her vulture-form, however, content to watch the PCs' actions from above. Aziz holds back, keeping an eye on Farida.

If the PCs attack the ammut with spells or missile weapons, it emits a deafening roar (all within 20′ must save vs. poison to avoid deafness for 1-10

rounds) and then hurries back to the shadows. If it is not attacked, it approaches to within 20' of the caravan and slowly looks each person over while using its ability to *detect evil.*

Finding nothing of interest, the ammut uses its roar to scare off the group (including the camels) and then returns to the shadows. If the PCs pursue it, Farida warns them to stop.

> "The little pets may be pretty, but they can be a bit temperamental. I wouldn't want to see you all get killed when you've come this far, my dears."

At the Edge

> A shimmering curtain rises from the desert floor straight ahead, reaching high into the air and stretching as far as you can see to the left and right. As you approach, you see images flashing on the curtain. One spot shows the towers of a strange city, another shows a vast jungle, a third shows a small farming community. Suddenly, the familiar sight of the massive walls of the city of Qudra appears on a nearby section of the curtain.

If Farida or the hermit is with the PCs, their guide now calls on them to concentrate on where they were before they entered the Borderland. Soon, an image of a violent sandstorm appears across most of the curtain.

If the PCs attempt to cross through the curtain when it is showing any location other than the sandstorm, it acts as an impassable barrier to those whose material bodies are still alive (those who cast shadows in the Borderland). Others can pass through the curtain at any time, but they must assume hama-form in the world of the living. Undead can pass through the curtain freely.

Two undead shadows lurk near the curtain, waiting for weakened victims. If Farida is with the group, she cries in her vulture-voice, "Don't be afraid of the flickering darkness as you pass through the curtain. Ignore it, and it will ignore you."

If the hermit is the group's guide, he says, "You must be careful when approaching the curtain. Creatures of living darkness may attack you there. If you are defeated, you will become as they are. Go through now, but be wary. May Fate be kind to you." Shortly thereafter, he seems to fade away; he can no longer maintain his meditation. (See "Event 1: The Feast.")

Shadows (2): INT low; AL CE; AC 7; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 19, 15; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-5 plus special; SA strength drain; SD +1 or better weapon to hit, undead immunities; SZ M; ML 20; XP 420; MM/312.

If the PCs ignore the shadows, the DM should make a surprise check when the shadows attack. The shadows always win the initiative in the first round of battle, regardless of the outcome of this check. If the PCs are prepared for an attack, they win the initiative in the first round of combat. The PCs may attempt to flee from the shadows by jumping through the curtain, but once through there is no way to go back to rescue anyone detained by the shadows.

As soon as the struggle between the PCs and the shadows has begun, Farida attempts to pass through the curtain. Instantly, Aziz swoops down to force her to turn back. Aziz's greater maneuverability easily allows him to prevent her from getting past him.

When the shadows have been defeated and the PCs finally pass through the curtain, utter darkness envelops them for several heartbeats. The PCs may not immediately know when this blindness has lifted, because their transition through the curtain places them in the midst of the sandstorm again.

Back in the Desert

The sandstorm is waning when the group returns to the world of the living. As it dissipates, one of the PCs might catch a glimpse of a vulture and an eagle battling in the sky high above. The vision soon disappears, however.

When the storm is over, everyone can start digging out from under the sand. They all have lost a few hit points from near suffocation, but only those who did not return from the Borderland are dead. The PCs' memories of their experiences in the Borderland seem like a dream—but it is a dream they all shared.

Umar is embarrassed by his lack of trust in Fate and his unmanly behavior in the Borderland. To save face, he acts as if nothing has happened and busies himself checking on the camels and the caravan drivers. He tries to reassume his role as leader of the caravan.

Before the caravan is ready to get on the move again, one of the caravan drivers comes running, yelling that he has found several corpses nearby. These are the decomposed bodies of Latifa and her guards, uncovered by the sandstorm.

When Ahmed's body is found nearby, Umar orders it searched for evidence that Ahmed was a spy for the desert bandits. The PCs soon find a crude map hidden in Ahmed's aba, showing the location of the desert bandits' camp and noting when the attack on the caravan was to have taken place.

Concluding the Adventure

With the help of Ahmed's map, the PCs can find the bandits' camp nearby. The DM may determine its exact strength, but at least 40-50 bandits are camped there, along with 4-5 lieutenants (F3-F5) and a leader (F7). All are well armed with long swords or scimitars and have leather or studded leather armor. If the PCs do the wisest thing, they will return to Qudra and inform the emir's troops of what they have found (although this might make Diyab very upset). Umar warns them that continuing on to Hiyal with the caravan would be very dangerous; the bandits are certain to be watching for them.

Depending on what the PCs do, the DM can continue this adventure in several directions. A single PC might try to sneak past the bandits during the night to take Diyab's diamonds to Hiyal. The PCs might heed Umar's advice and return to Qudra. Or, if they are extremely brave (or foolhardy), the adventurers might attempt to attack the desert bandits by themselves. If they succeed in wiping out the bandits and bringing proof back to Qudra, the emir will double their reward to 10,000 gp.

If the PCs successfully return from the Borderland, they should receive a story award of 10,000 XP. If they return to Qudra with the location of the desert bandits' camp, they should receive an additional award of 5,000 XP. Twice this amount should be given if they defeat the bandits (assuming the bandits represent a sizable force). If the PCs get Diyab's diamonds to Hiyal in time, those involved in that adventure should receive an additional 1,000 XP to share between them (plus additional amounts for any creatures slain). Ω